

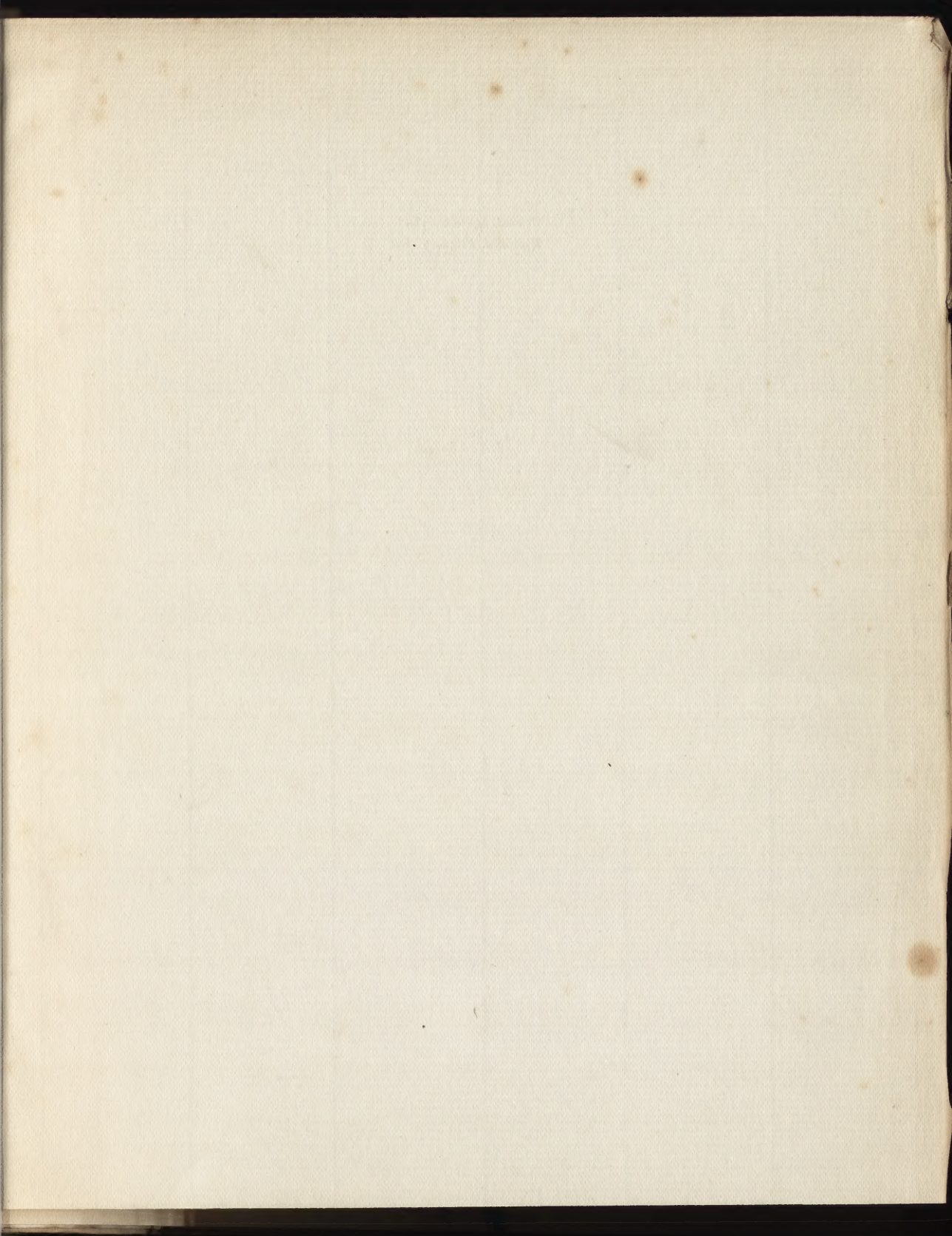
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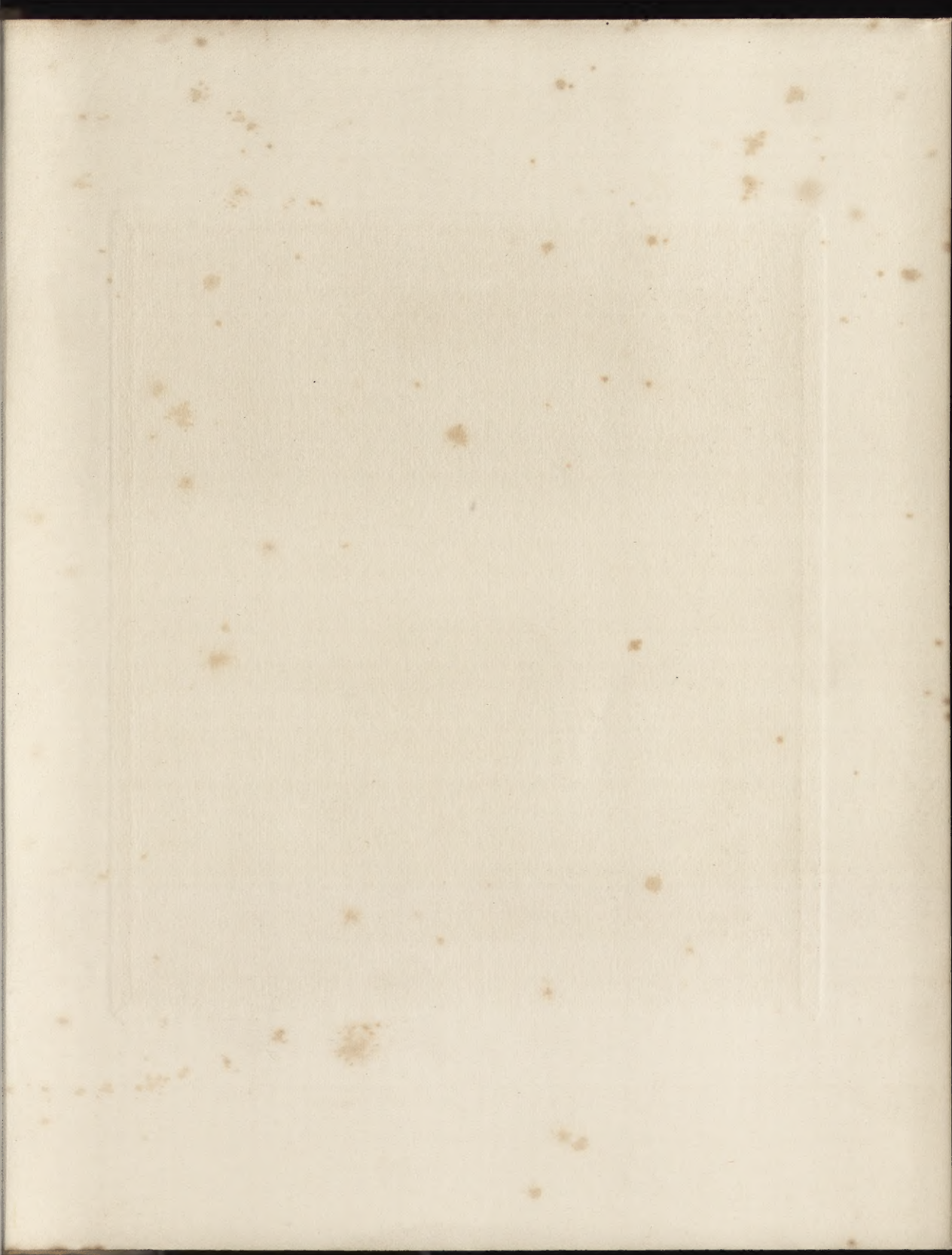
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Printed, September 1897
Reprinted, February 1898

GOSSIP FROM A
MUNIMENT-ROOM

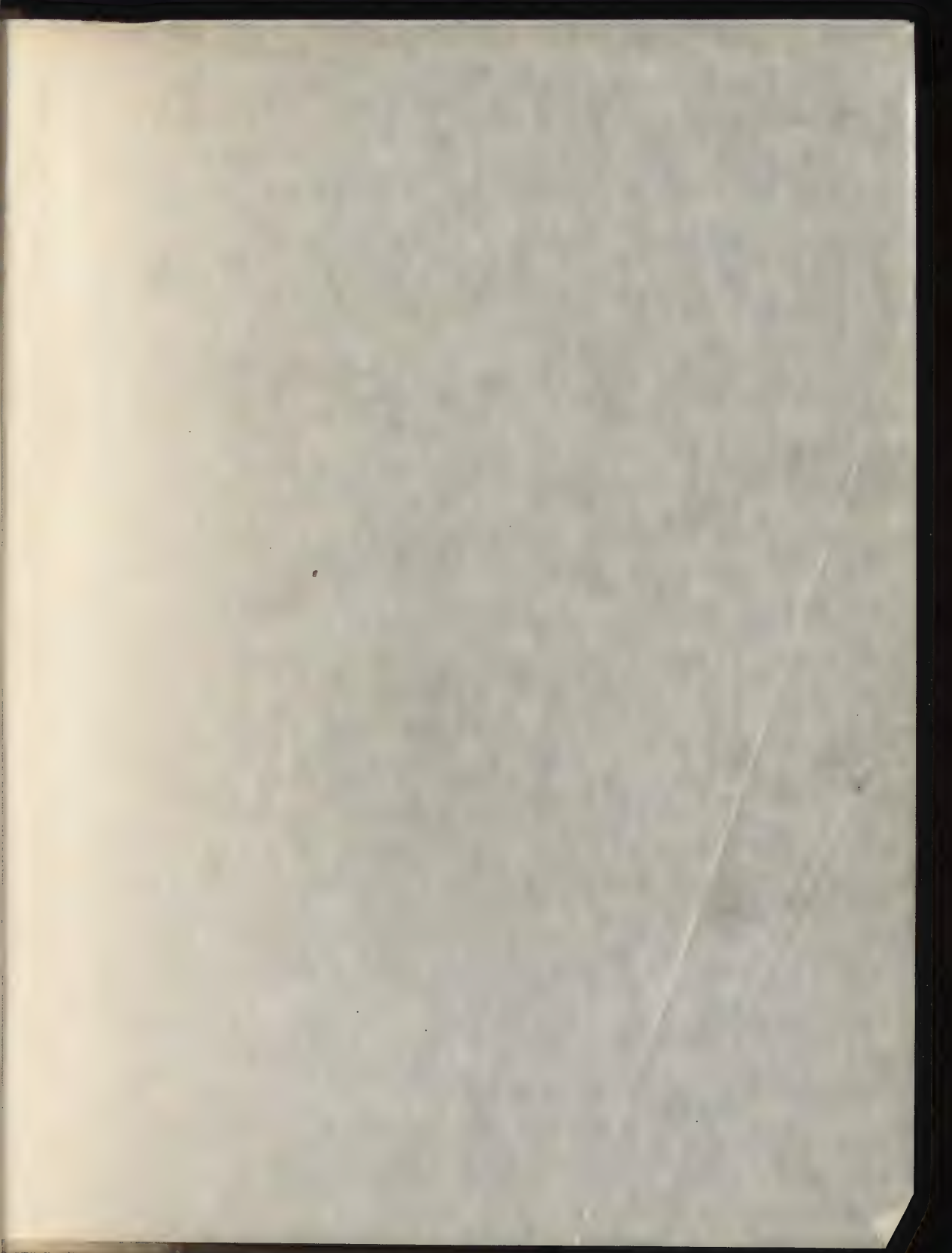
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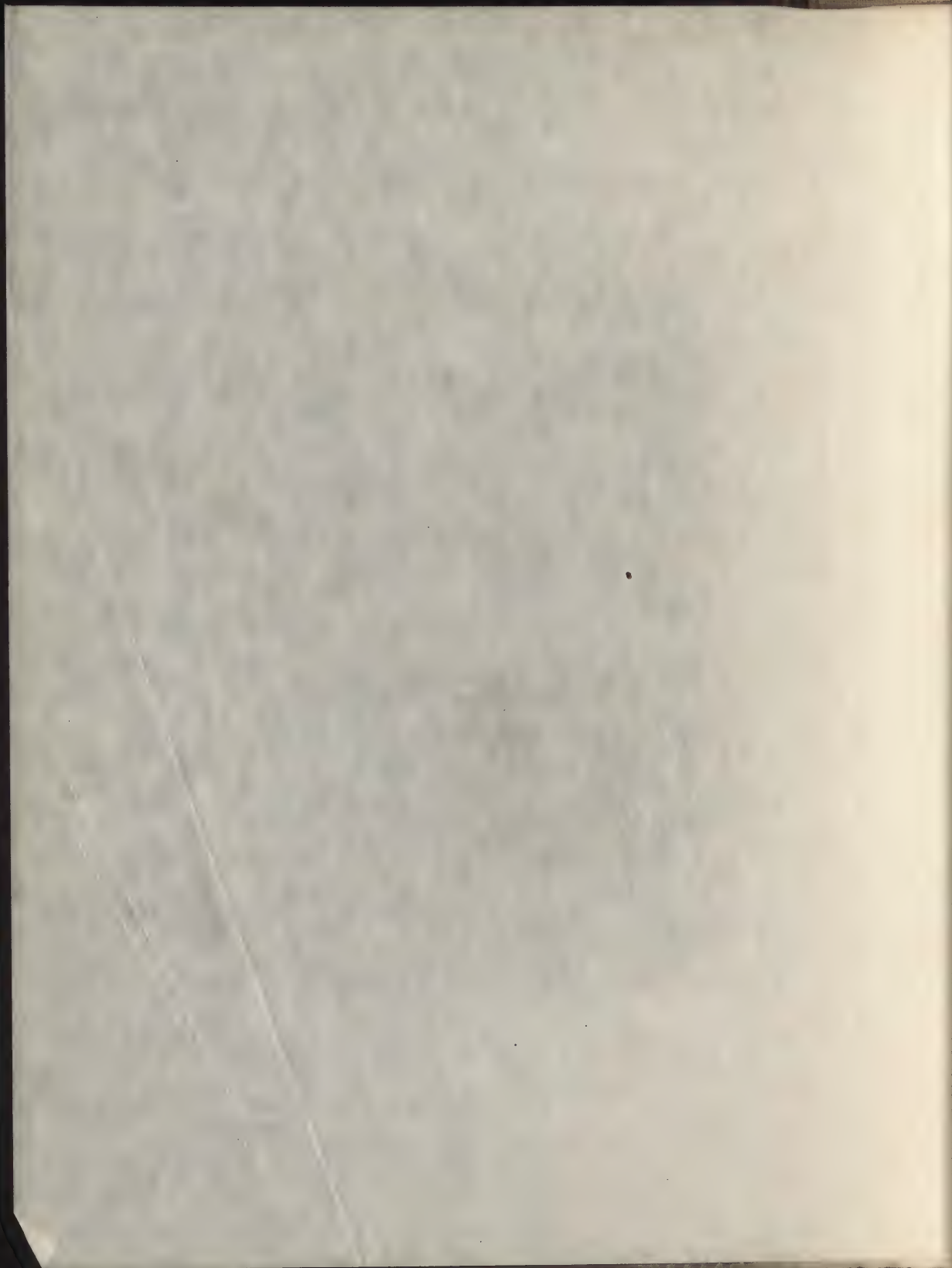




Anne and Mary Fyhton.
Aged 18 and 15.

Frontispiece.





GOSSIP FROM A MUNIMENT-ROOM

BEING PASSAGES IN THE LIVES
OF ANNE AND MARY FITTON

1574 TO 1618

TRANSCRIBED AND EDITED BY
LADY NEWDIGATE-NEWDEGATE



LONDON: DAVID NUTT IN THE
STRAND

MDCCCXCVIII

THE HISTORY OF THE ROYAL NAVY

BY
ADMIRAL LORD ALBERT A. M.
OF THE ROYAL NAVY

LONDON:
PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE, HANSON & CO.



Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
At the Ballantyne Press

TO MY HUSBAND
LT.-GENERAL
SIR EDWARD NEWDIGATE-NEWDEGATE, K.C.B.
OF ARBURY
AND
GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GRANDSON
OF ANNE FITTON
LADY NEWDIGATE





PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

IN issuing a second edition, which is virtually a reprint—the book having excited more interest than was expected—the Editress wishes to offer her best thanks to her reviewers for their kindly and interesting criticisms. At the same time she must apologise for having unintentionally disappointed some expectations of learning and research which were neither within her powers nor within the scope of a book bearing so unambitious a title.

She has tried to profit by some of the suggestions made, but finds she has nothing to alter in the identification of Francis Beaumont. Even critics may be led
vii astray

Preface to Second Edition

astray by the bearers of that name who were living simultaneously towards the end of the sixteenth century.

The additions comprise an index, some explanatory notes, and an appendix by Mr. C. G. O. Bridgeman in answer to Mr. Tyler and the doubts he has cast upon the authenticity of the Arbury portraits.

The Editress having had her attention drawn to an article in the *Theatre* of December 1897 by Dr. Furnivall, in which he charges her with having changed her opinions on the question of the Fitton portraits since 1891, would like to make the following explanation :

When Dr. Furnivall and Mr. Tyler came down separately to Arbury in 1891, the question of the supposed identity of the Dark Lady of the Sonnets was to her a new idea. At that time she, with others, was deluded by the inscriptions on the portraits, together with some misleading notes on letters in the muniment-room. Since then the pictures and the letters have been carefully studied, with the result, as given in this work, that the two portraits here reproduced are believed to be of Mary Fitton, and the only portraits of her at Arbury.*

This

* See Appendix A.

Preface to Second Edition

This little book was not compiled to prove or disprove the theory so ably advocated by Mr. Tyler. Mary Fitton is not in any case a connection to be proud of, and if the antagonistic testimony of the pictures can be refuted, her distant relatives are quite willing to accept her as the Dark Lady.

The Fitton element in the book having excited special attention, the Editress has included a few details concerning the Fitton ancestors, for which she is chiefly indebted to Dr. Frank Renaud's researches among the Irish State Papers, Domestic Series, embodied in his article on the "Memorial Brasses of Sir Edward Fitton and Dean Robert Sutton in St. Patrick's, Dublin," originally published in the "Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society," vol. xi.

Lastly, she hopes, by transcribing the letters of this later edition in accordance with modern orthography, leaving the syntax unaltered, to render them more accessible to those who have been baffled by the varied and eccentric spelling of the Elizabethan era. The superscriptions and signatures are left as in the originals, but in order to be consistent the name of Fitton, elsewhere, is spelt as is the practice
ix of

Preface to Second Edition

of the present day. The motto inscribed by the Fittons over one of the arches at Gawsworth may also be cited in favour of this form, it being evidently a play upon their name : Fit Onus Leve.

ARBURY, *January* 1898.



INTRODUCTION



THE following passages in the lives of Anne and Mary Fitton have been chiefly gleaned from old letters and papers in the muniment-room at Arbury.

The task of putting them together in the form of a narrative was undertaken in the first instance for the benefit of the descendants of the elder sister, who have hitherto known little about her. It has since been suggested that so genuine and authentic a record of that distant period may have a wider interest than for family only.

The history of Anne is of necessity a one-sided tale,
xi being

Introduction

being drawn from the large correspondence she kept up with both men and women friends after her marriage, and though she carefully preserved their letters, her own, with one or two exceptions, are not at hand to make the narrative as complete as could be desired.

Mary Fitton, on the other hand, is not unknown to history, and some interest has been aroused in her of late years by Mr. Tyler's clever attempt to identify her with the Dark Lady of "Shakespeare's Sonnets."*

On one point there is ample evidence. Both sisters seem to have been unusually gifted with physical and mental charms, and to have been admired and loved by persons of note in the era in which they lived.

In order to make this account more complete and interesting, the letters will not be given in their bald simplicity, but with explanatory connecting links and with short biographical and historical facts concerning the writers.

The letters will follow each other as far as possible in their proper sequence, but where there are no dates it is only

* See Tyler's "Shakespeare's Sonnets." David Nutt, Strand.

Introduction

only from internal evidence that they can be placed in their supposed order.

The spelling in the originals is of the most varied character, and it will be observed that even the proper names in signatures and addresses vary as the writer's phonetic sense dictates.

It is unavoidable that occasional references and observations in these letters remain unexplained. As mentioned above, the clue which might be given by the other side of the correspondence is absent. In spite of this drawback, the Editress hopes to give a fairly consecutive history of some twenty-two years in the lives of her heroines, inventing nothing and withholding neither good nor evil, though the frankness of one or two of the writers is somewhat startling to modern ideas.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of various factors on the growth and development of the human body. The study is based on a series of experiments conducted over a period of six months. The results of the study are presented in the following sections.

The first section of the study is a review of the literature on the growth and development of the human body. This section discusses the various factors that influence growth and development, including genetics, nutrition, and environment. The second section of the study is a description of the experimental methods used in the study. This section discusses the subjects of the study, the procedures used, and the data collected.

The third section of the study is a presentation of the results of the experiments. This section discusses the growth and development of the subjects over the six-month period. The fourth section of the study is a discussion of the results of the study. This section discusses the implications of the results for the study of growth and development.

The results of the study show that growth and development are influenced by a variety of factors. The study also shows that the growth and development of the human body is a complex process that involves many different factors.



CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

<i>Court & Country Life</i>	Page I
---	-----------

The Fittons of Gawsworth—Newdegates of Arbury—Anne's Marriage—Letter of Arabella Stewart—Mary becomes Maid of Honour—Letters from Sir William Knollys to Anne—Anne's Daughter Bern—Letters from Sir Fulke Greville—Mary Fitton to her Sister Anne.

CHAPTER II

<i>Mary's Downfall & Disgrace</i>	29
---	----

Letters from Sir William Knollys—Trouble at Court—Mr. Tyler's Theory about the Dark Lady—Mary's Disgrace—Dismissal from her Post—Letters from the Fittons and Sir William Knollys.

Contents

CHAPTER III

	<i>Page</i>
<i>The Leveson Letters</i>	53

Birth of Anne's Sons—Sir Richard Leveson's Birth and Parentage—Letters from him and Sir Fulke Greville—Death of Queen Elizabeth—Sir John Newdigate Knighted—Letters from Sir Richard Leveson concerning a Nurse for the expected Royal Infant—Sir Richard Leveson's Death—His Will.

CHAPTER IV

<i>Widowhood</i>	76
----------------------------	----

Mary's Manner of Life—Lady Fitton's Letters to Anne—Mary's First Marriage—Sir Fulke Greville's Letters—His Death—Mary's Widowhood—Death of Sir John Newdigate—Anne's Petitions for the Wardship of her Son.

CHAPTER V

<i>Friendship</i>	97
-----------------------------	----

Francis Beaumont's Birth and Parentage—His Letters to Anne Newdigate.

CHAPTER VI

<i>Courtship</i>	117
----------------------------	-----

"Cosyn Saunders" and his Suit—Francis Beaumont's Letters—Letter from Lady Ashburnham—Final Dismissal of Cosyn Saunders—Mary's Second Marriage.

Contents

CHAPTER VII

	Page
<i>The Valley of Death</i>	140

Letters from Lady Grey—Anne's Petitions to Lord Knollys—Her Cares for her Children—Her Declining Health—Her Death and her Will—Mary's Death and Will.

APPENDICES

<i>A. The Arbury Portraits of Mary Fitton, by C. G. O. Bridgeman, Esq.</i>	165
<i>B. Extracts from a List of Anne Newdigate's Expenses in 1607.</i>	175
<i>C. Genealogical Table of Newdegates and Fittons.</i>	

INDEX	178
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It is the duty of the physician to do his best for his patient, and to do this he must have the most up-to-date knowledge of the latest methods of treatment.

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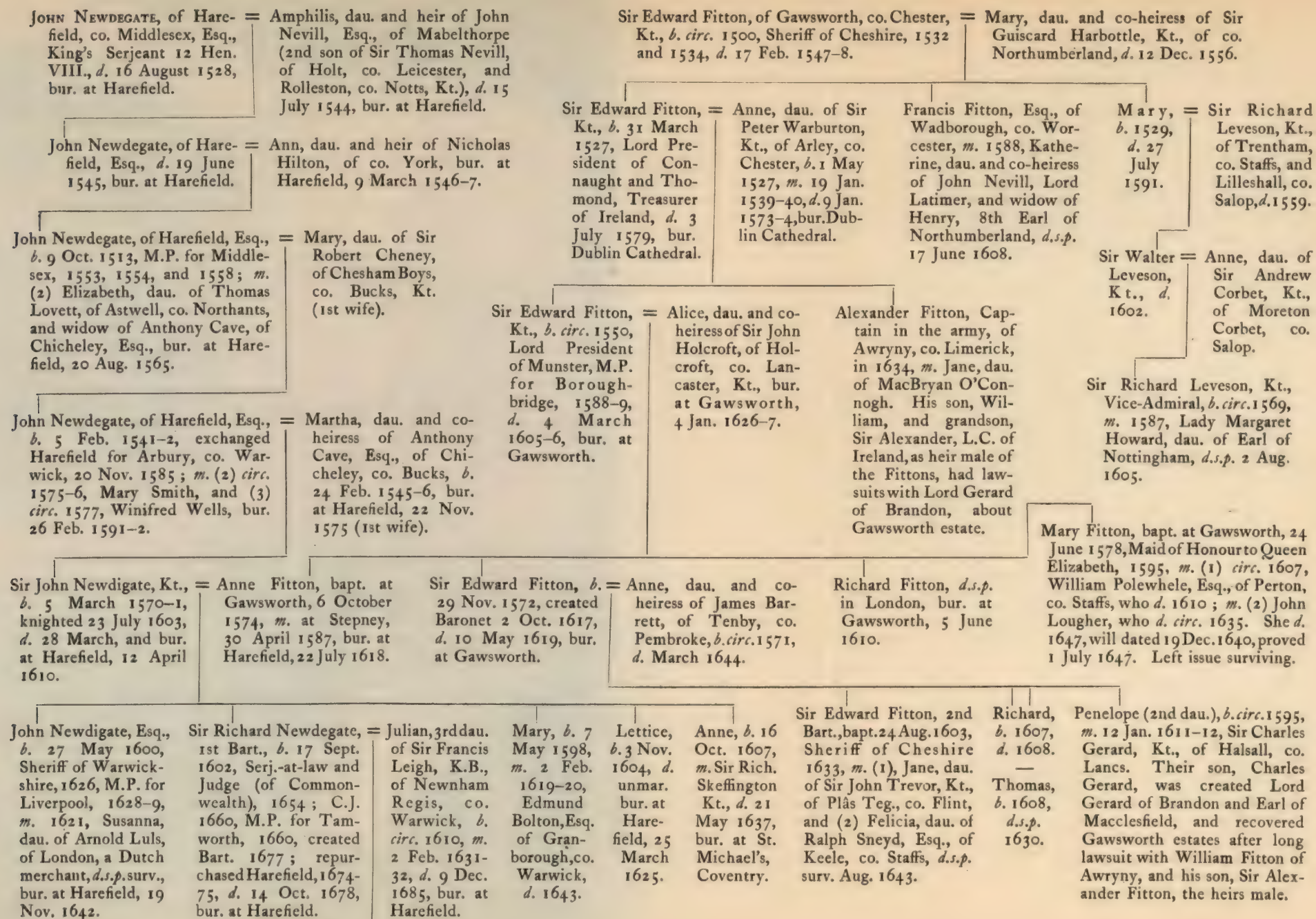
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APPENDIX C—Genealogical Table of Newdegates and Fittons





CHAPTER I.

Court & Country Life



ANNE and Mary Phytton, Fytton or Fitton were the daughters of Sir Edward Fitton, Knight, of Gaws-worth, co. Cheshire, and of Alice, daughter and co-heiress of Sir John Holcroft, of Holcroft, co. Lancashire. The Fittons evidently thought much of themselves, and with reason. They were of ancient lineage, had filled posts of honour in the State, and had been knighted for more than one past generation.

The grandfather of our heroines, also a Sir Edward Fitton, was the first president of the provinces of Connaught and Thomond in Ireland, under Queen Elizabeth, and afterwards was appointed Vice-Treasurer

Court & Country Life

of Ireland, although still required to reside at Athlone. During his stormy tenure of these offices he had more than one serious difference with the Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam. Elizabeth was appealed to for redress by both parties, but we may infer that she did not favour the Lord Deputy at Sir Edward's expense, for the former expressed a wish to be recalled, adding that "having been twice deadly bitten by Fitton, he must for ever beware of him, and that he was weary of his vain-glorious humour and tabering." On the other hand it is recorded of President Fitton that he was "a wise and sober man, not moved with passion, one who loved to do justice severely, and would for no respect offend his conscience." Queen Elizabeth and Burghley seem to have been fully conscious of his value, in spite of the antagonism of the Lord Deputy. Even if there had been some just cause for the existence of this feeling on Fitzwilliam's part, Sir Edward Fitton is undoubtedly in the right when he sagely remarks on one occasion, "simple is the office that is free from evil tongues." There is an elaborate brass to the memory of Sir Edward Fitton and his wife Anne, daughter of Sir Peter Warburton, in Dublin Cathedral, where they are represented kneeling with folded hands, flanked on either side by their nine sons and six daughters. It is especially recorded that they were born in the same year, and their marriage took place when they were only twelve years of age.

Court & Country Life

On Sir Edward Fitton's death in 1579, his eldest son, Edward, who was knighted five years later, seems to have felt himself aggrieved because his father's office did not descend to him by inheritance, although he still retained the demesne and house at Athlone. He was afterwards made President of Munster, and in 1586 tried to induce his Cheshire neighbours to take part in the peopling of that province, whilst he himself raised a troop of twenty-five horsemen out of six score enrolled for its defence.*

The family of Sir Edward Fitton and Alice Holcroft, his wife, consisted of four children only, two sons and two daughters. Of the latter, Anne, the elder, was born in the month of October 1574, and her sister Mary some three-and-a-half years later. Their brothers were Edward and Richard, the first of whom was created a baronet in 1617, whilst the younger died unmarried in 1610. Sir Edward Fitton, first baronet, had a daughter named Penelope, who married Sir Charles Gerard. Their son, created Lord Gerard of Brandon and Earl of Macclesfield,† succeeded to the Gawsworth estates on the failure of issue to Penelope Fitton's brother, the second and last baronet.

Anne

* Dr. Frank Renaud's "Memorial Brasses, &c." Manchester : Richard Gill, Tib Lane, Cross Street.

† The Fittons of Gawsworth held one of the posts of hereditary sub-rangers of Maxfield Forest.

Court & Country Life

Anne Fitton, the elder of the two sisters mentioned above, had a husband chosen for her by her parents whilst she was still a child, in accordance with the practice of the age. At twelve years of age she was married in London to John Newdegate or Newdigate,* aged sixteen, the eldest son of John Newdegate, of Arbury, in Warwickshire. The mother of the youthful bridegroom was Martha Cave, daughter and co-heiress of Anthony Cave, of Chichely, Bucks. She died in 1575, a few years after the birth of her son.

Arbury seems to have been securely settled on young John Newdigate. His father married twice after his first wife's death, had several more sons, and accumulated debts to such an extent that he ended his days in the Fleet prison, dying there at the age of fifty. Nevertheless, he it was who bought Arbury in 1586 from Sir Edmund Anderson, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in Queen Elizabeth's reign. The present house had been built a few years previously by Sir Edmund on the ruins of the old Erdburie Priory. John Newdegate had to exchange his old family manor of Harefield, in Middlesex, in part payment for Arbury, retaining only the messuage and farm of Brackenbury with the aisle of that name in Harefield Church, the burial-

* The name has been spelt in various ways. The present family spell it Newdigate, with the exception of the owner of Arbury, who is obliged by will to spell it Newdegate.

Court & Country Life

burial-place of his family for many generations. Sir Edmund Anderson soon parted with Harefield to Sir Thomas Egerton (afterwards Baron Ellesmere), Lord Keeper to Queen Elizabeth, who married, as his second wife, Alice, widow of Ferdinando, Earl of Derby.* The manor of Harefield was bought back from the heirs of this Lady Derby by John Newdegate's grandson some ninety years later. Sir Thomas Egerton and his son Sir John Egerton (afterwards Earl of Bridgewater) married, one, the widowed Countess of Derby, and the other her second daughter, Lady Frances Stanley, both of whom are mentioned in the letters that follow.

After the ceremony of marriage between Anne Fitton and young John Newdigate in 1587, Sir Edward Fitton seems to have undertaken the young couple's expenses. Many years later Anne refers to her father having kept "her husband, herself, a mayde and two men for nine years," after her marriage, "of free will and without ever haveing paye allowed." She appears to have been living at home in her father's house at Gawsworth or in London during this period, whilst her boy-husband was probably continuing his education elsewhere.

In a letter from John Newdegate (the spendthrift) "to the

* This marriage took place in 1600, and Sir Thomas Egerton bought Harefield in 1601. Queen Elizabeth's visit to Harefield was in July 1602; an account of which, in the original MS., is at Arbury.

Court & Country Life

the Right Worshippfull Sir Edward ffytton Knight," dated November 1588, and entirely on money matters, he adds as a postscript, "Good Sr, let me see my daughter, how I longe to see her."

Anne was at this time just fourteen years old. The earliest portrait of the two sisters at Arbury must have been taken four years later. It is a double one, three-quarter length, and painted on a panel. Their respective ages of eighteen and fifteen are recorded on the picture. Anne, the elder, has dark hair and eyes and arched eyebrows. She has a gentle, serious expression, and is depicted full face, the shape of an oval contour, whilst her features are small and regular. She is dressed in hoop and ruff in accordance with the custom of the period.

Mary's girlish figure is less matured, her complexion fairer, and her face narrower, with a longer nose. Her lively grey eyes have the alert, bright look of her age, indicating, perhaps, already the wit and brilliancy which were among her prominent charms.

It must have been whilst Anne was still an inmate of her old home that she became acquainted with the ill-fated Arabella Stuart, or, as she spells her own name, "Arbella Stewart." The two girls were nearly of an age, Anne being one year the older of the two. She has preserved the following letter from her friend, it being as remarkable for the beauty of the writing as for its superiority in diction and spelling to many others

Court & Country Life

from persons in the same position of life at that period.
It is addressed :

To my good frende M^{rs} Anne Newdigate.

I thank you sweet M^{rs} Newdigate for your fine cuffs and kind remembrance of me, hoping this our acquaintance newly begun shall continue, and grow greater hereafter, of which I shall be very glad ; as likewise I shall be to see you some time here when you best can. Thus with my very hearty commendations to you and my Lady Fitton I end. Chessey this 14 of March.

Your assured frende

ARBELLA STEWART.

It was not until 1595 or 1596 that Anne Newdigate finally left her father's house to begin her married life at Arbury. About the same time Mary Fitton received the appointment of Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth. Henceforth Anne's and Mary's paths in life took very different directions, but in joy and sorrow, through good report and evil report, in spite of sin and shame, Anne clung to her sister Mary with faithful affection. One of the earliest letters preserved by the young wife after she left London is from an old friend, who much regrets her departure.

To my honorable fayre M^{rs} Ann Newdigate theise at Arbery.

Longing so much as I do to hear of your good agree-
ment

Court & Country Life

ment with the Country life, I have persuaded my comfortless Eyes to watch till my hand might discover my desire to be satisfied therein. Write with every occasion so shall you hence ordinarily receive salutations. No News here worthy [of] you ; all at this end of the town are become melancholy for the want of your presence. I love you and ever will, and so I betake you to your rest, being about to take my own.

Strand, this present Monday, December 1596.

Yours

HEN. CARYE.

It is not easy to make out who was the writer of this letter.* It could not have been Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, the first cousin of Queen Elizabeth, for he died in July of that same year, but it was probably some member of his family, as there are letters of this period from Lord Hunsdon's daughter Margaret, Lady Hoby, to Anne Newdigate, with whom she seems to have been on intimate terms.

We must now leave Anne to accommodate herself to "the Country life" whilst we launch Mary on her career as Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth. It was about 1595 that Mary Fitton, being seventeen years old, began her Court life.

Sir

* There was a Sir Henry Cary who was made Master of the Jewels on 21st June 1603, on James I.'s accession.

Court & Country Life

Sir Edward Fitton, in his natural anxiety for his young daughter's welfare in her new and trying position, made interest on her behalf with a personage of importance at the Court, who was now Comptroller of the Household, and later on Treasurer.

This was an old friend of his own, Sir William Knollys, son of Sir Francis Knollys, and first cousin once removed to the Queen on her mother's side through the Careys. At this time he was upwards of fifty years old, and had been some time married to Dorothy, daughter and co-heiress of Lord Bray, and widow of Edmund Brydges, Lord Chandos, who had been left her husband's sole executrix and the possessor of much wealth for her life. In his will Lord Chandos grants her this life interest "as his most faithful and loving wife, for her obedience truth and faithful love towards him."

Though Dorothy was a valuable prize as regards her wealth, she must have been considerably older than her second husband, and we have reason to believe he chafed at the chain that prevented his marriage with a younger and fairer spouse.

Sir William's brother, Henry Knollys, had married the only daughter and heiress of Sir Ambrose Cave, a first cousin of John Newdigate's mother, Martha Cave. Sir Ambrose was the courtly knight who picked up Queen Elizabeth's garter at a Court Ball, but when he offered it to the Maiden Queen "she would none of it," where-

Court & Country Life

upon he bound it on his left arm and swore to wear it as long as he lived.

This Cave connection with both the Knollys' and Newdigates is here mentioned to show that Sir William, who was an old friend of Sir Edward Fitton's, had another claim to something more than a formal acquaintance with his daughter Anne through her husband's cousinship with his brother Henry's wife. Mary Fitton, being just out of childhood, was probably more of a stranger to him.

The earliest letter we find from Sir William Knollys is addressed :

To my verye lovyng frend S^r Edward Fytton, Knight.
[How it came into Anne's possession we cannot say]

S^r Edward, I am sorry your disease should so trouble you, as it deprives me of your company whilst you remain in London, but I will by no means that you trouble yourself with going abroad, but since you must undertake so great a journey, be careful to make yourself strong until you go. I wish I were at liberty to accompany you to Arbury & so to Drayton.*

I will not fail to fulfil your desire in playing the Good Shepherd & will to my power defend the innocent lamb from the wolfish cruelty & fox-like subtlety of the tame beasts of this place, which when they seem
to

* His brother Henry Knollys' country place.

Court & Country Life

to take bread at a man's hand will bite before they bark ; all their songs be Syren-like, and their kisses after Judas fashion, but from such beasts deliver me and my friends. I will with my counsel advise your fair daughter, with my true affection love her and with my sword defend her if need be. Her innocency will deserve it and her virtue will challenge it at my hands, and I will be as careful of her well doing as if I were her true father.

Touching yourself I will say only this, that your love to me is not unrequited & that whensoever any occasion shall be offered wherein I may stand you in stead, I will never fail to use my uttermost power. In the mean time with my best salutations to yourself and my Lady, wishing you both health & happiness

I remayne ever

Your assured lovyng ffrend

W. KNOLLYS.

Thus Mary Fitton was launched on her Court life under powerful protection, but the "innocent lamb" soon turned out to be an arrant coquette, and Sir William's professions of fatherly affection rapidly grew warmer and blossomed into ardent love, which he confides in a series of letters to her sister Anne. Sometimes he veils his sentiments in the language of parable, but more often they are expressed in the frankest terms, apparently with no compunctions in regard to the existing Lady Knollys.

Court & Country Life

M^{rs} Newdigate [he writes] your kind letter to your dear sister I have seen, wherein I find that though you be nearly joined by the law of nature, yet are you more surely united in the bond of love which exceedeth all bands and bringeth with it in the end a blessing where it is truly continued. Your thanks I accept as a recompence sufficient for my lines, but your excuse of not presuming to write again I nothing allow, seeming thereby to make my white staff* an argument of your sloth, if I may so say, but to you & yours I desire neither to be head nor foot, but in that equal proportion where friendship is like to continue surest & longest & what is dear to you is dearest to me. Wherefore once again I will bid you the base, hoping you will not always keep the goal in silence. Some reasons methinks might breed a better sympathy between us, for I imagine we both having too much do yet want, though in divers respects our summer is turned to winter, the one by the airy element, the other by the earthly. The fairest flowers of our gardens be blasted, yours in the bud by some unwholesome easterly wind, mine in the leaf by the hoar frost and the difference is that because the wind may change your hopes may revive & by reason of the continual frosts my looking for any fruit of my garden is in vain, unless the old
tree

* The emblem of his post at Court.

Court & Country Life

tree be cut down & a new graft of a good kind planted.

But I leave to parable and in plain english wish you what you most desire. As for me my hopes being desperate & fortune ever frowning, were it not that by the sunshine of some pleasing thoughts I were somewhat relieved I should die both in hope & heart. Yet hope is the only food I live by & patience is my pillow to rest upon, both which I wish you to make your companions as remedies against all diseases of the mind. If I have been too long blame the matter which leadeth me along, if too bold with you let my desire to provoke you to a "lyterall" [literary?] quarrel be my excuse, & if too open impute it to my trust. But it is time to leave troubling you any longer & forgetting myself. Wherefore wishing you all health & happiness both of body and mind I desire to be esteemed in the number of your best friends, both for the love I bear to your father & all his & for your own worthiness, remaining ever this 20th of May

Your assured ffrend

W. KNOLLYS.

It seems difficult to find any excuse for this writer's open avowal of impatience at the impediment that obstructed the desired end to his courtship of the attractive Maid of Honour. Neither is it easy to understand how

Court & Country Life

Anne, the excellent Anne of whom nothing but good is known, could by her sympathy permit these frank avowals of Sir William's love for her sister. He even seemed so sure of her approval and co-operation as to ask for her prayers on his behalf in a subsequent letter. Here we find the disadvantage of a one-sided correspondence. There may have been extenuating circumstances of which we know nothing. Otherwise we can only be thankful we no longer live in the age of "good Queen Bess," but in the more outwardly decorous days of our Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria.

The letters which follow are given verbatim, for were they to be curtailed, or any sentences omitted, their historical interest and value would be injured. They have been considered of sufficient importance to have been preserved for nearly three hundred years in the muniment room at Arbury, though never yet made known, even to the immediate members of the family. It is also necessary to remember that letters of this period were written with infinite pains and much consideration, and consequently have a value far superior to the hasty scrawls of to-day. From their style and superscription they appear to have been invariably sent by hand, and months often intervened between their dates. We must now let Sir William continue the tale of his tantalising courtship. In his next letter he refers to Anne's hopes of becoming a mother, her previous

Court & Country Life

expectations having been disappointed, as we may gather from his former remarks:

Honorable Lady, the more you go about to disable your own worthiness the more do you make it shine in yourself & by that means bring me farther indebted to so great a kindness. The least good thought of your well wishing mind is a recompence sufficient for my small power to afford you what you are worthy of, but such as they are command and think that your Dearest Dear doth not wish you better than I do. As God hath blessed you with increase so blessed be you ever & freed from all discontents, & though myself can not but be now upon the stage & play his part who is cloyed with too much & yet ready to starve for hunger, my eyes see what I can not attain to, my ears hear what I do scant believe, & my thoughts are carried with contrary conceits, my hopes are mixt with despair & my desires starved with expectation, but were my enjoying assured, I could willingly endure purgatory for a season to purchase my heaven at the last. But the short warning, the distemperature of my head by reason of the toothache & your sister's going to bed without bidding me goodnight will join in one to be a means that for this time I will only trouble you with these few lines scribbled in haste, and wishing you all happiness, a good delivery of your burden, and

Court & Country Life

your sister in the same case justifiable, I leave you to God's good protection, myself to your dearest sister's true love and her to a constant resolution to love him only who cannot but ever love her best & thus with my best salutations I will ever remain

Your most assured friend

I would fayne saye brother

W. KNOLLYS.

In the next letter he becomes still more outspoken :

Honorable sister (I cannot choose but call you so because I desire nothing more than to have it so). Your fair written letter & more fairly indited I have received & read more than once or twice seeking to find there which so much you endeavour to put me in hope of. It is true that winter's cold is the murderer of all good fruits in which climate I dwell & do account it as a purgatory allotted to me for my many offences committed against the Highest, the rather because I am more observant & devoted unto his creature than to himself, from which to be delivered since there is no means but the devout prayers & orasions of my good friends let me entreat your fair self to pierce the heavens with your earnest & best prayers to the effecter & worker of all things for my delivery & that once I may be so happy as to feel the pleasing comfort of a delightful summer, which I doubt not will yield me the deserved fruit

Court & Country Life

of my constant desires, which as yet no sooner bud by the heat of the morning sun, but they are blasted by an untimely frost, so as in the midst of my best comforts I see nothing but dark despair. I could complain of fortune which led me blindly into this barren desert where I am ready to starve for want of my desired food & of myself that would suffer my reason to be betrayed by my will in following so blind a guide. But to all my wounds I will apply your plaster which is patience, a virtue I must needs confess, but having in a sort lost her force because it is forced. Continue, I earnestly entreat you, your prayer for my delivery, and your best means for my obtaining that without the which I am not myself, having already given my best part to one whose I am more than mine own. But I must cry silence lest I speak too loud, committing this secret only to your self to whom as I wish all happiness and your own heart's desire, so will I ever remain

Your most affectionat brother

W. KNOWLESSE then I would.

Anne's first child, a daughter, was born in 1598. The god-parents or "gossips" chosen for the baby were Lady Fitton, the grandmother; Anne's greatest friend, Elizabeth Lady Grey; and Sir William Knollys. Immediately after this happy event Sir Edward Fitton writes as follows :

Court & Country Life

Good Nan, God in heaven bless thee and my daughter* and continue thy health and life as my dearest friend and thereby comfort, next thy poor mother whose love and kindness to me and her children I fear will shorten her days, but she shall never want that comfort that I can afford her. . . . God bless your little one and grant thee as much comfort as ever mother had of child, but I am sorry that yourself will needs nurse her. . . . Thus longing sore to see thee . . . farewell this xvii of May 1598

Thy treuest friend

E^d ffYTTON.

And again in another letter dated the 3rd of July 1598 :

Nan Newdigate, I am to think myself much beholden to you as a father can be to a daughter. Your mother will needs send Frelan [?] and I send nobody but my own heart which ever shall be with you wheresoever my body is. I will see thee so soon as I can and that is soon as I can, and until then I will love thee, and ever remain more thine than my own.

E^d ffYTTON.

This latter date may have been that of the christening, for Lady Fitton writes on the same day :

My good Nan, I pray God bless you and my little daughter.

* A common term for grand-daughter and god-daughter.

Court & Country Life

daughter. I long to hear exceedingly how you both do. I had sent before this but that I hoped some other would have sent that do not. . . . I have sent you a nurse's reward x^{li} to buy you a kirtle for my daughter. I will provide somewhat when she is bigger to remember me by. I long to hear how all things about your new Charge goeth, for I persuade myself that my son Newdigate will not go back with his word. I pray God send you well to do with it. And we can do you any good let us know it and it shall be done. If you hear anything of your sister I pray let know, for I never heard from her since. God bless you and yours and send us all merry to meet. Gawsworth this third of July

Your lovyng

Mother A. ffytton.

Commend me kindly to your husband.

To my good daughter M^{rs} Anne Newdygat at Erbery.

It will be observed that even so early as this year, 1598, Lady Fitton had cause for anxiety about her daughter Mary, who seems to have been on more confidential terms with her sister than with her own mother.

Anne appears to have been an especial favourite with other members of her family. Her eldest brother writes these few lines of warm affection, which, though undated, may come in here :

Court & Country Life

Sweet sister, if I should paint my love in words it were very little to be respected, but I hope you know it without any ceremony, you shall see me before my going over, ever thus remaining

Absolutli yours

E. PHYTON.

Commend me to your husband.

Francis Fitton,* Anne's great-uncle, who had married the widowed Countess of Northumberland, was a constant correspondent of hers. In this year, 1598, he writes :

Mine own good niece, my earnest poor love unto you maketh me desirous to see you & especially in your own house, and your kind acceptance of my meaning is such as it bindeth me more to you for the same for which I can but rest thankful & so keep it in my breast. And as my desire to know of your abiding at home or not this winter was only that I meant to come to see you, if possibly I might . . . but if I possibly may I will see you this Christmas, if not it shall be much against my will.

Your

* It is recorded of this Francis Fitton that, whilst his brother Sir Edward Fitton was Treasurer of Ireland, he (Francis) had a commission to convey to him £5000. He sailed from England with this treasure on the 10th of August, but only arrived in Ireland on the 23rd of October—a voyage of more than two months.—(From Renaud's "Memorial Brasses, &c.")

Court & Country Life

Your father's house in London this xi of November
1598.

Your owne uncle & affectionat frend to all my
powere

FRANCYS FYTON.

I pray to be remembered to my cousin your husband
and to my young mistress when she can understand
my language.

To myne especiall good neece M^{rs} Newdigate at hir
house at Arbery in Warwickshire.

Sir William Knollys accepts the post of "Gossip" to
Anne's little daughter in the next letter, and at the same
time he tenders advice on a subject that is not usually
considered one of the duties of god-parents.

How desirous I am in person to perform the office
of a godfather mine own heart knoweth & you
should have seen if I were within mine own power,
but such is my bondage to this place as I have
neither liberty to please myself nor satisfy my good
friends' expectation, amongst which I must account
you in the foremost rank, as well for your own
worthiness as for being so nearly united both in
nature & love to those which I honour much & who
may more command me than all the world besides.
But my thoughts of that party I will leave to be
discovered not by this base means of pen & paper

but

Court & Country Life

but by myself. Accept I pray you of my lawful excuse for not coming myself, assuring you that I will be ever ready to perform any friendly duty to you. I have entreated my brother Blunt* to supply my place in making your little one a Christian soul & give it what name it shall please you. Imagine what name I love best and that do I nominate but refer the choice to yourself, and if I might be as happy to be a father, as a godfather, I would think myself exceeding rich, but that will never be until one of your own tribe be a party player. I should like nothing that you play the nurse if you were my wife. I must confess it argueth great love, but it breedeth much trouble to yourself & it would more grieve you if sucking your own milk it should miscarry, children being subject to many casualties. But you may tell me I am more curious in this point than I need, but I speak it in friendly council not meaning either to contrary your own will or dissuade you from your resolution if by a reasonable persuasion yourself think not good to alter your purpose. Thus without further compliments, wishing you a happy mother of many children & your own heart's desire, with my
best

* Sir Christopher Blount, third husband of Lettice Knollys. Her first husband was Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex, and her second was Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.

Court & Country Life

best salutations I commend you to God & will ever remain

Your assured poore ffrend & gossepp

W. KNOLLYS.

To my verye Lovyng ffrend M^{rs} Anne Newdygate.

The suggestion of the writer in regard to the naming of his god-daughter was carried out. She was christened Mary; but Sir William's advice on a more domestic matter was not as effective. Anne was too devoted a mother to abandon any duty towards her child. Henceforth this correspondent always addresses her as his "Gossip."

Fair Gossip, the conveniency of this bearer and the desire I have not to be behind with you in any kindness is cause that I may not leave you unsaluted. The many testimonies you have made of your worthy respect of me bind me to be thankful by all the means I may, and you shall ever be assured I will not fail to perform the part of a true friend whensoever you shall have cause to try me. I am sorry I cannot assure my coming to Arbury being under the command of a greater power, but if it be possible for me to break loose but a little I will, God willing, see Drayton and take Arbury in my way. Until then I recommend you to your best delights & thus wishing you as much happiness as

your

Court & Country Life

your heart can think with my best salutations to
yourself & my blessing to your little one I remain
ever

Your verye assured ffrend

W. KNOLLYS.

Anne Newdigate had other correspondents at this time, one of them being Sir Fulke Greville, father of the Sir Fulke Greville who afterwards became Lord Brooke. They were both men of whose friendship she might be justly proud. Camden says of the elder Sir Fulke, "He was a person no less esteemed for the sweetness of his temper than the dignity of his station. He was a gentleman full of affabilitye, which got the love of the whole countrie. For in his time no man did bear a greater sway in the countie of Warwicke."

In addition to Sir Fulke's other merits he possessed the useful one of always dating his letters, but his handwriting is unusually difficult to decipher, partly owing to old age and partly to the gout, which often attacked his hand and arm. Occasionally he had to make use of an amanuensis, though always signing for himself.

Anne seems to have been much attached to him, and had given him the title of her "master," presumably from the love and admiration she felt towards him. The earliest letter to be found from him is written in





*Mary Fytton.
Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth.*

To face Page 25.

Court & Country Life

1599, when he must have been about seventy-two years old.

Dear esteemed & best beloved servant, All the words in the world cannot sufficiently express the joy & comfort I take in bearing the title & name of your master. Many men are diversely affected, some take pride of fair houses, some of their wealth, some of fair wives & others of their children. I only glory that I have a servant which contains all virtues & the same draws to her the true love & affection of all good minds, & mine in good faith sweet servant in such sort that though I have the honor to be called your Master, you have the power to command me & anything I have, & in that so ready to obey that I shall be most glad when you shall be pleased to use that your authority. My servant farewell, be not weary in well thinking of him whose thoughts are still bent to do you honor. My sister Greville kindly commends her to you & if she do not love to speak what she thinks not (which I never yet knew her to do) then she loveth you more than exceedingly. We prattle many times of you, I wish your ears glow not. I desire to be in all friendly sort remembered to M^r Newdigate whose felicity I shall envy the less if he will accompany you once a year to this house. My brother salutes you even with whole heart. I commend my body, soul, life, lands & goods into your hands,

God

Court & Country Life

God prosper you & yours, so shall not I fail to do well. From Beachampscourt this 20th of August 1599 by him that loves & honors you

Your M^r off your own favor & curtesye

ffOWLKE GREVYLE.

The next letter, a year later, is written from Coventry, eight miles from Arbury, and is inscribed :

To my servant, best beloved & deerest esteemed never to be changed, M^{rs} An. Nudigate geive thes.

My good servant, I dare not let pass such a messenger without my lines, lest that may be imputed to me which I hate above all things, carelessness or forgetfulness of so faithful a servant & so good a friend. I am not yet so well that I dare adventure to ride so far. But when I feel myself able, I will visit you God willing, & in the mean time & ever after love you & be ready to do you pleasure. To the Lord I leave you and him heartily pray to give you all things agreeable to your noble heart.

From Coventre this 28th off Apreill 1600

Your M^r & ever assured frend

wthout dissimulation

ffOWLKE GREVYLE.

There are portraits of Anne and Mary at Arbury which must have been taken about this date. The
26: elder

Court & Country Life

elder sister, attired in hoop, farthingale, ruff and distended sleeves, has the gentle, serious expression of her earlier portrait. She has the same dark hair and eyes, arched eyebrows and pale complexion. By her side, on a table, stands her little daughter, encircled by the mother's arm.

Mary Fitton is in full Court dress, with high open ruff, large hoop and puffed sleeves. She must now have been at the height of her favour with her royal mistress. The unformed girl has developed into a high-bred-looking lady with handsome grey eyes, fair complexion, and rather a long thin nose. The portrait is only three-quarter length, but gives the impression of a tall slight figure. The expression has changed, under the schooling of a Court life, to one of almost studied demureness, leading one to suspect a vein of subtlety beneath ; or is it because we know her history that we discern so much ?*

Amongst

* The Editress has been reproached by Mr. Tyler with having omitted the inscription painted on the right-hand top corner of this picture. It runs as follows : "Lady Macclesfield, 3rd Dau. of S^r Edward Fitton K^t Dame of Honour to Qⁿ Elizabeth." She scrupled to perpetuate such palpable errors. Sir Edward Fitton, father of the Maid of Honour, had but two daughters, and the Macclesfield peerage was not created until 1679. It was then conferred on Lord Gerard, son of Penelope Fitton, the surviving representative of Sir Edward Fitton, first and last baronet. These and other errors probably date from the time when the Arbury pictures were cleaned and varnished in 1768. The then owner of

Court & Country Life

Amongst all Anne's numerous correspondents we only find one letter from her sister Mary. This is written in a scrawling hand, is more than usually ill-spelt, and contains nothing of interest. It is given here because it shows the affectionate terms existing between the two sisters :

To my dearest syster M^{rs} An. Newdigate.

Since distance bares me from so great happiness as I can seldom hear from you, which when I do is so welcome as I esteem nothing more worthy, and for your love which I doubt not of shall be equalled in full measure, but lest my lines too tedious were, and time that limits all things* bares me of words, which else could never cease to tell how dear you are, and with what zeal I desire your return, than can wish nothing than your heart's desire and will ever continue

Your affectionat sister

MARY PHYTTON.

Arbury, with a lamentable ignorance of Fitton genealogy and his own family letters, must have run three generations into one and conferred the title of Macclesfield on Mary Fitton when it was only created for the benefit of her great-nephew thirty-two years after her death.

* A correspondent discovers a Shakespearian turn even in this illiterate letter. "Time that limits all things" may possibly recall "Time and the hour runs through the roughest day."



CHAPTER II

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

WE have now reached a period when stirring events took place at Elizabeth's Court in connection with one of our heroines. Sir William Knollys at this time had other troubles to distract him in addition to his hapless love affair. He writes his next hurried letter when much disturbed by the disgrace of his nephew, the valiant but reckless Earl of Essex : *

Fair Gossip, I must crave pardon for my so long silence, not grown by a negligent forgetfulness of so good a friend, but forced by a distraction I have had
concerning

* Essex's mother was Lettice, daughter of Sir Francis Knollys.

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

concerning the Noble Earl of Essex, which hath made me careless to satisfy myself or my friends. I leave to you to imagine the discomforts I take hereof when your sister is fain to blame me for my melancholy & small respect of her, who when I am myself is the only comfort of my heart. She is now well & hath not been troubled with the mother* of a long time. I would God I might as lawfully make her a mother as you are. I would be near both at Arbury to shun the many griefs which this place affordeth & she should enjoy the company of the most loving & kind sister that ever I knew. My heart is so full of sorrow at this time for my lord of Essex being dangerously sick before his restraint, as I am scant myself. Receive therefore I pray you these ragged lines from a broken head as a remembrance of [a] most faithful friend who will ever be ready to do all good offices wherein I may stead you. Thus leaving for this time abruptly with my best wishes of your best desires, I commend you to God & will ever remain

Your assured lovyng gossepp & ffrend

W. KNOLLYS.

God bless my fair daughter & kiss it I pray you kindly for me.

No wonder Sir William was thus disturbed about his
nephew

* Hysterical passion; so called as being imagined peculiar to women.—(Johnson's Folio Dictionary, 1755.)

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

nephew Essex. Later on he was one of the four members of the Privy Council sent to parley with him, when Essex, intoxicated by wild ambition, had assembled a crowd of his dependants with every sign of hostile intention at Essex House in the Strand. The other three were the Lord-Keeper Egerton, the Earl of Worcester, and Popham, Lord Chief Justice of England. After some parleying they retired with Essex into the house, when their graceless host bolted the doors upon them in the inner apartments, whilst he went off to see what support he might hope for from the City of London. "Thus were these four of the Privy Council confined and left in custody of a rabble, in peril of their lives." In the end they were released by Sir Ferdinando Gorges, and Essex expiated his succession of treasonable attempts with his life.

In the next letter Mary Fitton appears still to be encouraging her elderly lover with hopes that she would be willing to wait for him until he was free to marry her.

Fair gossip, your uncle's sudden departure and my coming—by chance coming—to London when he was ready to take his journey is cause you must look for no compliments at this time, only you shall know that true affection is as well expressed in few words as in many & I assure myself your wisdom doth not measure love by lines. So as having saluted you with my best commendations & assured you that I

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

will be ever ready to perform toward you all the good offices of a true friend : the best news I can send you is that your sister is in good health & going to the Court within 2 or 3 days, though I think she could be better pleased to be with her best sister upon some conditions. Her greatest fear is that while the grass groweth the horse may starve & she thinketh a bird in the bush is worth 2 in the hand. But both she and I must have patience & that will bring peace at the last. Thus in some haste with my best salutations to your self, and my kindest blessing to my daughter I wish you your heart's desire & will remain ever

Your ffaythffull ffrend & gossepp

W. KNOLLYS.

This is the last letter in which the writer and Mary seem to have been on the best of terms. A cloud intervenes, which will be explained in due course :

Honorable gossip [writes Sir William] your few lines but very pithy and significant were very welcome to me & I think I shall be forced in as brief manner to return you mine by reason of this bearer's hasty departure, but with them a very thankful & brother-like acceptance of your kind remembrance. It was against my will I saw you not this summer. I had purposed it but being restrained of my liberty by necessary state occasions I was disposed of otherwise.

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

It is true that winter's approach hindered my journey to Arbury and so unhappy I am as I never find summer, but being fain to feed upon the dead stalk I live in doubt ever to enjoy the sweet fruit of my summer's harvest. My ground is covered with the bramble & the brier which until it be grubbed & cut up there is no hope of good. It may be you country wits may give council in such a case. Advise me I pray you in this extremity and if I may once bring it to a fruitful soil, I doubt not but you shall be partaker of my longed for husbandry. This bearer hasteth away & I will find some other time to send to you, so as for this time wishing you your heart's desire I remain ever

Your most assured ffrend

W. KNOLLYS.

And again :

Fair Gossip, having so convenient a messenger though my warning be but short I may not suffer him to pass by you without some salutations which in regard of the humour I am put into though they can be but melancholy yet to one to whom I have been so much beholden as your fair self I will ever be thankful & just. Methinks it is pity that 2 bodies & one mind, so firmly united as your sister's & yours, should not endure so much distance of place, but that you are both bound—the one by her Majesty's service, the other by a commanding

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

husband—& yet I that am at the next door do think myself now farther from the place I most desire than in the beginning of my journey. Such is the variety of this world & the uncertainty of this time I must live in frost & snow subject to blasts & all ill winds & shall I fear never be so happy as to possess the fair flower of the summer's garden. I hope you dwell under a better climate where the sun sometimes comforteth though the soil be subject to fogs & mists. Make a virtue of necessity & since your lot fell not to dwell in the land of promise where all things were given that were desired, work your own contentment out of your own worthiness & be ever happier than your unfortunate gossip who will be ever ready to do you respectable service remaining ever

Your affectionate friend & gossepp

W. KNOLLYS.

Anne's "unfortunate gossepp" seems to have been, when at Court, not only figuratively but literally next door to the abode of the maids of honour.

Sir Nicholas L'Estrange relates the following anecdote : "The Lord Knollys" (as he became at James I.'s coronation) "in Queen Elizabeth's time had his lodging at Court, where some of the Ladies and Maids of Honour used to frisk and hey about in the next room, to his extreme disquiet a nights, though he often warned

them

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

them of it. At last he gets one to bolt their own back door when they were all in one night at their revels, strips off [to] his shirt, and so with a pair of spectacles on his nose and Aretine in his hand comes marching in at a postern door of his own chamber, reading very gravely, full upon the faces of them. Now let the reader judge what a sad spectacle and pitiful fright these poor creatures endured for he faced them and often traversed the room in this posture above an hour." *

The next events in the Court life of Mary Fitton are chiefly taken from Mr. Thomas Tyler's work on Shakespeare's Sonnets, to whom we are much indebted for his researches into the history of this Maid of Honour in order to make good his theory that she was the Dark Lady of the Sonnets.

It may be as well to state at once we think this theory cannot be proved. From the portraits at Arbury, Mary was in no respect the brunette described by Shakespeare as follows :

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun,
Coral is more red than her lips red :
If snow be white why then her breasts are dun ;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head ;

I have

* This anecdote has been taken from a book entitled "Bygone Cheshire," published in 1895 by Wm. Andrews & Co., of Hull. It may be found in the chapter headed "Was Mary Fitton Shakespeare's Dark Lady?" where it is quoted from Thom's "Anecdotes and Traditions."

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

I have seen roses damask'd red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks.

And again :

Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem
At such, who not born fair, no beauty lack,
Slandering Creation with a false esteeme.

Mary, on the contrary, was fair, not "dun"-complexioned, her hair was brown, not "black wires," and her eyes were grey, not "raven-black."

Nor have we any hint in the letters that she had any personal acquaintance with Shakespeare.

Certainly in the year 1600 William Kempe, the Clown in Shakespeare's company, dedicated his "Nine daies wonder" to "Mistris Anne Fitton, Mayde of Honour to most sacred Mayde Royal Queene Elizabeth." The name Anne is plainly a misnomer for Mary, and shows how slight was Kempe's knowledge of the "Mayde of Honour," though doubtless he selected her as his patroness not only on account of her natural gifts,* but in order to ingratiate himself with one so high in favour with Queen Elizabeth.

The

* A writer in *Literature* of Nov. 4th, 1897, gives us an interesting sonnet addressed to "Mistress Mary Fitten" by the author of a quaint and rare volume printed in 1599, and entitled: "A Woman's Woorth Defended against all the Men in the World, proving them to be more perfect, excellent, and absolute in all virtuous Actions

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

The book gives an account of a journey which Kempe had performed morris-dancing from London to Norwich.

In his dedication Kempe says :

To shew my duty to your honourable self, whose favours (among other bountiful friends) make me (despite this sad world) judge my heart Cork and my heels feathers, so that methinks I could fly to Rome (at least hop to Rome as the old Proverb is) with a Mortar on my head. But in a word, your poor servant offers the truth of his progress and profit to your honourable view ; receive it I beseech you, such

as

than any Man of what qualitie soever. Written by one that hath heard much, seene much, but knows a great deal more."

The lines are as follows :

This testimonie of my true hart's zeale,
Faire and (for euer honord) vertuous maide :
To your kind fauor humbly dooth appeale
That in construction nothing be mis-saide.
Those fierie spirits of high temperd wit,
That drink the dewe of Heaven continually :
They could have graced you with termes more fit,
Then can my lowlie, poore, weake ingenie.
Let not my loue (yet) flightly passe respect,
Devoted onely to your excellence :
Winke woorthy Virgin at my lines defect,
Let will extenuate what ere offence.

It is no bountie that is giuen from store,
Who giues his hart, what gifts can he giue more?

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

as it is, rude and plain ; for I know your pure judgment looks as soon to see beauty in a Blackamoor, or hear smooth speech from a Stammerer, as to find any thing but blunt mirth in a Morris dancer, especially such a one as Will Kemp, that hath spent his life in mad Jigs and merry jests.

To quote further from Mr. Tyler :

It was in June of this same year (1600) that there was a remarkable festivity at Blackfriars. William Herbert * was present, as was also a lady with whom we shall be still further concerned in the sequel. The occasion of this festivity was the marriage of Lord Herbert (son of the Earl of Worcester) with a lady of the Court, Mrs. Anne Russell. The Queen herself was there ; and having come to Blackfriars by water, she was carried from the water side in a lectica borne by six knights. The bride was conducted to church by the nobleman with whom we are now more particularly concerned, William Herbert (son of Lord Pembroke), and Lord Cobham. The Queen supped and passed the night at Lord Cobham's.

Rowland Whyte, in a letter to Sir Robert Sidney, dated 14th June 1600,† says :

There is to be a memorable masque of eight ladies.
They

* The W. H. of the Sonnets? † "Sidney Papers," ii. 201.

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

They have a strange dance newly invented ; their attire is this : each hath a skirt of cloth of silver, a rich waistcoat wrought with silks & gold & silver, a mantle of carnation taffeta cast under the arm, and their hair loose about their shoulders curiously knotted and interlaced. These are the Masquers : My Lady Dorothy [Hastings], M^{rs} Fitton, M^{rs} Carey, M^{rs} Onslow, M^{rs} Southwell, M^{rs} Bess Russell, M^{rs} Darcy and my Lady Blanche Somerset. These eight dance to the music Apollo brings, & there is a fine speech that makes mention of a ninth, much to her Honor & Praise.

And again, in another letter written shortly afterwards,* he says :

After supper the masque came in as I writ in my last ; and delicate it was to see 8 ladies so prettily and richly attired. M^{rs} Fitton led, & after they had done all their own ceremonies, these 8 lady masquers chose 8 ladies more to dance the measures. M^{rs} Fitton went to the Queen & wooed her to dance ; her Majesty asked what she was ; " Affection," she said. " Affection !" said the Queen ; " Affection is false." Yet her Majesty rose and danced ; so did my Lady Marquess [of Winchester].

In

* " Sidney Papers," ii. 203.

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

In the next January William Herbert became Earl of Pembroke on the death of his father. The goings on at the Court at this time seem to have been notorious :

One M^{rs} Martin who dwelt at the Chopping Knife near Ludgate told me that she hath seen priests marry gentlewomen at the Court, in that time when that M^{rs} Fitton was in great favour, and one of her Majesty's maids of honour, and during the time that the Earl of Pembroke favoured her she would put off her head tire and tuck up her clothes and take a large white cloak and march as though she had been a man to meet the said Earl out of the Court.*

It must have been about this time that Sir William Knollys writes to Anne in evident distress about Mary's conduct :

Honorable gossip so much have I been ever beholder to you in your true respectable good opinion of me as I should greatly blame myself & be thought unworthy if I should suffer your letters to return unanswered, not having other means to manifest how much I account myself indebted to you for many kindnesses, especially in your well wishing to me in a
matter

* "State Papers," Dom. Add. vol. xxxiv. of "Cal. State Papers," Dom. Add. 1580-1625, p. 411, where the name is erroneously given as "Lytton."

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

matter which most imported me, which I think will be clean extinguished, though I leave nothing on my part to be done for the continuance thereof. But since I know this discourse will nothing please you, let me assure you that no friend you have shall be more ready to do all the offices of a true friend than myself wishing the party I spoke of before so worthy & fair a mind as my gossip hath. But since wishes can not prevail I will hope the best & pray that God will rectify if anything be amiss, accounting myself the unfortunate man alike to find that which I had laid up in my heart to be my comfort should become my greatest discomfort. But why do I trouble you with these things, let me live in your good opinion & I will ever deserve it, & thus wishing you all contentment & your heart's desire I will ever remain

Your ffaythffull ffrend

W. KNOLLYS.

Mary Fitton seems to have been launched on a mad career that could only end in disgrace. In a letter of January 26th of this year (1601) from Sir John Stanhope to Sir G. Carew we find this paragraph :

Of the persecution [which] is like to befall the poor maid's chamber in Court, and of Fitton's afflictions, and lastly her commitment to my Lady Hawkyns, of the discouragement thereby of the rest, though it be now out of your element to think of, yet I doubt

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

not but that some friend doth more particularly advertise you.*

Next month, on February 5th, in the postscript of a letter written from the Court by Sir Robert Cecil to Sir George Carew it is recorded :

We have no news but that there is a misfortune befallen Mistress Fitton, for she is proved with child, and the Earl of Pembroke being examined confesseth a fact but utterly renounceth all marriage. I fear they will both dwell in the Tower awhile, for the Queen hath vowed to send them thither.†

Then we come to a letter (in the Record Office) from Tobie Matthew to Dudley Carleton on March 25th, which contains the following passage :

The Earl of Pembroke is committed to the Fleet ; his cause is delivered of a boy who is dead.‡

Thus Mary Fitton's short but brilliant career at Court came to an untimely end in dire disgrace. The Maid of Honour especially favoured by the Queen and adored by the Comptroller of the Household only seems to have escaped imprisonment in the Tower by "commitment to my Lady Hawkyngs" for her confinement.

It

* "Cal. Carew MSS.," 1601-1603, p. 13.

† Ibid. p. 20. ‡ "Cal. State Papers," Dom. 1601-1603.

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

It is not surprising that her parents were greatly distressed at this shameful catastrophe, though they still apparently hoped that Pembroke could be induced to marry their daughter.

Sir Edward Fitton writes to Anne from London soon afterwards :

Sweet Nan, I am very sorry that you are not well and so is your good Gossip also [Sir Wm. Knollys?] who hath him commended to you heartily. I pray you let hear from you as I do. I am in some hope of your Sister's enlargement shortly, but what will be the end with the Earl I cannot tell. So soon as [I] can you shall hear. I have delivered your letter to my Lady Derby* and so praying you if this bearer cannot otherwise do, that you help to hire him a horse to Lichfield to my host at the George : and so with my very hearty commendations I bid you farewell this xxijth of Aprill 1601

Y^r loving father & friende

E^d ffYTTON.

Good Nan make sure that this bearer have a horse to Lichfield if not to Cheshire.

Lady Fitton adds a few lines on the same sheet :

My own good Nan this letter must serve for us both.

Beware

* Second wife of Sir Thomas Egerton, the Lord Keeper.

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

Beware how you take physick. Let me hear how you do. When we hear any good news you shall hear from me. God bless you and yours.

Your lovyng carfull mother

A. ffyton.

There is a letter from Sir Edward Fitton to Sir R. Cecil in Lord Salisbury's collection on this matter. It is dated May 16, 1601, and shows that some pressure had been exercised to induce Lord Pembroke to consent to a marriage, but without effect:

I can say nothing of the Earl, but my daughter is confident in her chance before God and wisheth my Lord and she might but meet before in different scenes. But for myself I expect no good from him that in all this time hath not shewed any kindness. I count my daughter as good a gentlewoman as my Lord is though the dignity of honour (be greater only in him) which hath beguiled her I fear, except my lord's honesty be the greater "vertuoes."*

This

* Mr. Tyler has expended some time and trouble in clearing up the meaning of this obscure letter. Briefly stated, his suggested explanation is as follows:

I can say nothing of the Earl, but my daughter is confident in her chance before God and wisheth my Lord and she might but meet before [that day] in different scenes [at the altar]. But for myself [Sir Edw^d's own opinion] I expect no good from him that in all this time hath not shewed any kindness. I count my

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

This letter is written from Stanner, where Sir Edward was obliged to stop on his road to Cheshire, his daughter being with him, and too weak to travel farther. Thus he had obtained her "enlargement" from my Lady Hawkyns' keeping, and was carrying her homewards, but apparently in secrecy.

Francis Fitton writes to his great-niece, Anne Newdigate, eight days later, on the 24th of May 1601 :

Mine own sweet niece, I thank you much for your last of the 14th of this instant (lately by me received) and so likewise for many other before, because I honor you and love you as any the dearest friends you have. I suppose your father by his stolen journey into Cheshire (unknown to me) hath acquainted you with something concerning your sister's estate. How true I know not for I find halting with me in their courses
for

daughter as good a gentlewoman as my Lord is [equal in social status], though the dignity of honour (be greater only in him) [his title] which hath beguiled her I fear, except my lord's honesty be the greater vertues.

This last difficult phrase may, according to Mr. Tyler, mean "unless my Lord's honesty have greater power than his noble rank," or "unless my Lord's honesty be greater than my daughter's virtues," or "unless my Lord's honesty be the greatest of his virtues and endowments." The word "honesty" is, of course, used in the Shakespearian sense.—(Tyler's "Shakspeare's Sonnets," p. 90, Edition 1890.)

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

for her. God grant all be for the best but for ought I know & can see I see nothing better nor cause of better hope than before & I wish all things for her good so well as you desire which is all I can do, and so good niece farewell ten thousand times. ffrom my lodginge the signe of the Black Boye, a Chandler's house neare the weste end of the Savoye in the Strand this 24th of Maye 1601.

Your lovinge uncle & assured

poore frind,

FRANCYS FYTON.

I pray you remember me very kindly to your good husband and do long to see you both.

The next letter from Sir William Knollys must have been written after Mary had left the Court and gone to her faithful sister Anne. In spite of all that had occurred, the infatuated man seems still a victim to her charms :

Fair Gossip, sweet & pleasant was the blossom of my love, so comfortable & cordial to my heart as I had therein placed all my delight, I must confess the harvest was overlong expected yet had I left nothing undone in manuring the same but that it might have brought forth both wholesome & pleasing fruit. But the man of sin [Pembroke?] having in the night sowed tares amongst the good corn both the true husbandman was beguiled and the good ground abused. How much more unhappy am I who though

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

with all the care & industry I can use to bring this soil to her former goodness, yet is it impossible for me to prevail & God knows I would refuse no penance to redeem what is lost. I write not this to grieve her whom I have so much loved nor your good self, for there can be no greater punishment to me than to be a cause of either your sadness to whom I wish so well without comparison. I know your sister is apt to be melancholy & you can apprehend her grief more deeply than I wish. But you are not alone, neither can either of you be so often remembered with sad thoughts as I am for that which I can not remedy & yet can never cease to grieve at. Be you yet a comforter & I will not be wanting to add anything lying in my power to increase both your contentments, & if you were nearer that sometime I might play a part, I would not doubt but to pacify though not thoroughly to purge that humour of melancholy. Thus leaving you both to God's protection with my best salutations & blessing to my pretty daughter I remain ever

Your assured friend

W. KNOLLYS.

Let me be I pray you kindly remembered to M^r Newdigate & the more if he will come dwell at Brackenbury.*

There

* John Newdigate's property in Middlesex.

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

There are only two more of Sir William's letters to be given. The next refers to the proposed marriage of his niece Letitia Knollys, the daughter and co-heiress of Henry Knollys and Margaret Cave, the latter being first cousin to John Newdigate's mother, Martha Cave :

Fair gossip, having occasion to send this bearer to Drayton I should fail in good manners & might justly be accounted ungrateful if with some few lines I did not yield you my best thanks for your many kindnesses which I will ever be ready to requite to the uttermost of my power. Whether yet you be delivered or not of your pretty burden I know not but in both I wish you as much joy & comfort as your self can desire. I pray you tell M^r Newdigate that Her Majesty understanding of the match between M^r Paget and my niece doth so well like thereof as she doth not only commend him but all those which wrought a deliverance of my Niece from her bondage & it were too long to write how exceedingly she alloweth of the match. But he shall not need to speak too much hereof until my Nephew Paget hath been here and is disposed to publish it. Whether your sister be with you or no I know not, but if she be, add something to your love of her for my sake who would desire nothing more of God than that she were as capable of my love as I have ever meant it, & what will become of it God only

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

knoweth. Let it suffice that my first love shall ever
bind me to love her, yourself and all that love her,
& thus praying God to send you health & happiness
I remain ever

Your trulye affectionate gossepp
W. KNOLLYS.

Burn my letters if you please.

We now come to Sir William Knollys' last letter, and give it here, although the date is in advance of the period to which we must return later. It could not have been written until after July 1603, as it is addressed "To my very lovyng ffrend & gossepp my La : Newdigate," and John Newdigate was not knighted until the above date :

Fair & worthy Gossip, your father being the messenger I may not but answer both your lines with this simple pen & your kindness with whatsoever a true honest heart may afford, desirous still to cherish all the branches of that root into the which my unchangeable love was so firmly engrafted. What it was your self & the world did know, but what it is my heart only is sensible of, yet may I boldly say no earthly creature is Mistress of my Love, nor is like to be, as not willing to trust a woman with that which was so truly given & so undeservedly rejected. Where to find it I know not, unless it be either hidden in myself or laid up by some who

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

suffer it to rust in some out room of their careless thoughts. But were I not tied to a white staff in court & had liberty I would like a knight adventurer never rest until I found better entertainment for so good a guest. But what spirit guides my pen, or whither do I wander? You may guess at my meaning, she is not far from you that may decipher this riddle & I may boldly say that Mary did not choose the better part, yet let her I pray you know that no man can wish her more happiness & contentment than I do which I will be ready to manifest upon any offered occasion & though her commendations to me in your last letter were very ordinary yet let me be remembered to you both in the best manner I can as one who can not separate his thoughts from the remembrance of former bands. No more at this time, but wishing you & my godson* health & happiness I remain ever

Your ffaythffull ffrend & gossepp

W. KNOLLYS.

Excuse me I pray you for not writing to your unkind sister whose so long silence maketh me think she hath forgotten me & herself, I having deserved more than a few lines, but I am pleased since she will have it so.

In spite of this last touching appeal, Mary does not seem

* Probably Anne's second son, Richard, born in 1602.

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

seem to have been inclined to respond to her old friend's protestations of affection.

Consequently, when, in 1605, Dorothy, Lady Knollys, died, and Lord Knollys (as he was created at the coronation of James I.) became released from the ties he had borne so impatiently, it was not Mary Fitton who succeeded to the vacant place.

Two months after Lady Knollys' decease her husband married Lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of Thomas, Earl of Suffolk—she being nineteen and her bridegroom sixty-one.

We may here briefly relate the remainder of Sir William's history, as given in "Burke's Extinct and Dormant Peerages of Great Britain," 2nd Edition, 1840:

In 1614 Lord Knollys was appointed Master of the Wards, and within a short time installed Knight of the Garter. In 1616 he was created Viscount Wallingford, and advanced by King Charles I., in 1626, to the Earldom of Banbury. . . . He died in 1632, at the advanced age of eighty-eight. . . .

The subsequent history of this peerage is one of the most curious in the whole record of peerage claims. Upon the decease of the Earl of Banbury, the inquisition found that he died without issue, but leaving a widow Elizabeth, his last wife. His honours were then deemed extinct, and his estates passed to his collateral heirs, excepting such as he

Mary's Downfall & Disgrace

had devised to his widow, who remarried Lord Vaux.

In a few years this lady produced two sons, born during her marriage with Lord Banbury, her first husband. They had at first been called Vaux, but now she set them up as the sons of the Earl of Banbury, and gave to the eldest the title of that Earldom. . . .

Litigation on this point ensued with varying results for some generations until 1813, when the claim to the Earldom of Banbury by the then representative of the family was finally rejected.

Thus Dorothy Knollys was avenged.



CHAPTER III

The Leveson Letters



WE here take up the thread of Anne Newdigate's life, which seems to have been chiefly spent at Arbury amid her increasing family.

In 1600 her eldest son was born, and named John, the christian-name of the heads of the family for many generations. A second son followed in 1602, and was christened Richard, probably after his godfather, Sir Richard Leveson, of Trentham and Lillieshall, who was an admiral in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Sir Richard was related to Anne through the Fittons. His grandmother, who was a sister of Francis Fitton, Anne's great-uncle, married Sir Richard Leveson.

The Leveson Letters

Their son, Sir Walter, was the father of our Sir Richard, who appears to have been born about 1569, and therefore was only five years older than his cousin Anne.

Richard Leveson entered the navy at an early age, and quickly distinguished himself in the various actions of the latter part of Queen Elizabeth's reign. His promotion was rapid. In 1596 he was knighted, and on James I.'s accession to the throne he was appointed lieutenant of the Admiralty of England, or Vice-Admiral of England for life. In the following year he was made Marshal in the embassy for the conclusion of peace between England and Spain.

When under twenty years of age he was married to Margaret, daughter of Lord Howard of Effingham, afterwards Earl of Nottingham. The marriage turned out unfortunately, Margaret's fate being a lunatic asylum.

There is a full-length portrait of Sir Richard in the drawing-room at Arbury. He is in a black dress-suit with knee-breeches, carries a sword suspended from his side, and is standing by a table on which is a globe. In person he is tall and thin, with the complexion and eyes that accord with his red beard and moustache.

He was one of Anne Newdigate's correspondents whose letters she has carefully preserved, and evidently these cousins were much attached to each other. His usual mode of addressing her is as "Sweet wyff," though at

The Leveson Letters

the same time he is on the best of terms with her husband, John Newdigate, whom he speaks of as "Jake," or "Jak." It seems to have been in accordance with the fantastic fashion of the time to adopt terms of relationship between close friends which did not exist in reality. Anne has kept letters from women friends who address her as "Deare Sister," or "Swete Sister," and were it not that we know she had only one real sister—Mary, the Maid of Honour—we should imagine she had been one of a large number of Fitton daughters. Among those who wrote to her in these terms are Elizabeth (Nevill) Lady Grey, Mildred (Cooke), Lady Maxey, and Elizabeth (Beaumont) Lady Ashburnham.

Sir Richard Leveson's letters are as frank and hearty as a sailor's should be. He never wanders into the language of parable, like Sir William Knollys, nor wastes pens and paper in elaborate compliments, as was too much the habit of the time. He seems to have been generous to a fault, always sending Anne presents and offering her the use of his purse. His letters have the advantage of being dated, with only two exceptions, the earliest of which must have been written before Sir John was knighted, being addressed :

To my Lovinge Cosin M^{rs} Anne Newdigate at Arbery
these with speed :

Dear partner I can write you no News from this

The Leveson Letters

place because all Occurrences are According to the Time (semi mortua). They have resolved since my coming up to send me out again, Though the principal hope which drew the Queen into this Adventure be already returned into Spain.

I have delivered all the reasons and Arguments which my Little experience can afford to dissuade them, because I know that this time of the year doth yield so poor an expectation of profit upon that coast as I fear the voyage will prove both fruitless and unfortunate.

But since the project is their own the whole course of the Journey shall be carried by their own councils and Instruction from which I will not vary.

To be short I desire that the world should know how much I contest against it, and therefore if the success be ill I do entreat my friends (since I have no part of the plot) to endeavour by preoccupation to free me from the common censure of men, which for the most part is full of malice and detraction.

If I could promise but the least liberty to myself I would once more come down to Arbury to bid you farewell : or if you could be so happy as to be eased from the bondage of that pretty Nursery I would entreat you and my cousin Jack to meet me half way at the least. But since I see impossibilities in both I have purposely sent this messenger to kiss your hands and to let you know that wheresoever he

The Leveson Letters

be either at sea or at land you have still power to command.

RICHARD LEVESON.

London the 15th of Janu :

The 4th of febr^y I am gone. Commend my service to your sister and tell Mistress Waspsnest * that she bestow [the rest is torn off].

Sir Fulke Greville writes to Anne about the same date, also complaining of the ties of her nursery and tendering advice on the subject of her maternal duties which seem to have exercised the minds of more than one of her correspondents. But with Anne, devotion to her children was her most prominent characteristic, and she never abandoned any of the rights of a mother towards her infants, as is her proud boast hereafter.

To his much honored, best beloved and dearest esteemed servant M^{rs} An. Nudygate.

My fondly beloved servant, such as you left me still I am, though lame & uncertain in my limbs, yet still assured & constant in my love & friendship to you, sorrowing in nothing more for you, but that you will still continue a nurse & by that means hold back from such as much love & desire your company. It will besides make age to grow upon you & I wish you always green & flourishing as you were when
you

* Sir Richard's nickname for little Mary Newdigate.

The Leveson Letters

you were in your prime. My pilgrimage groweth to an end being over almost to a full point of the years that King David appoints for the years of a man which is threescore and ten. I wish your years may be doubled with such happiness & contentment of life that you may be joyfully here with your friends & after have life everlasting, & in this godly humour I leave you to his blessed keeping.

From your chardge att my Lodge this 4th March 1602-[3] Your ever lovyng trew assured frend & M^r

ffOWLKE GREVYLE.

This letter, from the date, was written shortly before the death of Queen Elizabeth, which event, as we know, took place on the 24th of March 1603, and caused much excitement throughout the country.

Sir Fulke Greville took a decisive step when the tidings reached Warwick.

Camden tells us, "Upon the news of the death of Queen Elizabeth, he being at Warwick at the great assize, came down from the bench and with some of his friends proclaimed King James which the judges of the circuit refused to doe."

Anne Newdigate, in her anxiety for news at this critical period, sends a messenger to London to her cousin, Sir Richard Leveson, who writes to her in answer :

The bearer hereof coming to my chamber before I

The Leveson Letters

was up would needs have me to write something, therefore you are more beholden to his importunity than to my disposition which at this Instant is either very sleepy or exceeding sullen.

I am the worst Intelligencer in the world, for I never walk out of my way to learn news, but what I know you shall have. The king is now at Newcastle upon his way towards London, but we do not expect his Arrival before the funeral of our late Queen, which is appointed to be upon Thursday in Easter week, and about twenty days After we do look for the Coronation. The Council standeth as it did, but some Addition is resolved which is yet kept secret. Southampton is at liberty and promiseth much to himself. Montjoye I hope shall be sent for and your Sister's mistress upon Sunday last did look passing merely [merrily?]. The Queen's old Maids (or rather) the old Queen's Maids (I hope) shall be entertained by the new, in which number Nevill* by my consent shall wear the Admiral's flag and his flagstaff also.

Thus

* Mrs. Nevill was appointed Maid of Honour in 1601, and seems to have been a young lady of a lively disposition. She was not reappointed by the new Queen. The ancient coat of arms of the Nevills contained a galley, and was sometimes called Nevill (Admiral) to distinguish it from the other coat of arms, Nevill or FitzMaldred (of Raby), also used by the family. This may explain Sir Richard's joke about the Admiral's flag and flagstaff.

The Leveson Letters

Thus much for the Court ; now to the City. Our merchants with one voice proclaim peace, then shall I and many other honest fellows be laid up in the wardrobe. London streets shall be hanged with Cloth of Gold when the king cometh, The Stones covered with Arras, the Conduits run Rhenish wine already, And my Lord Mayor upon his Ass Ranketh his brethren instead of a stand of pikes to receive the King. Either come up now and see this bravery or close your eyes whilst you live, for I hope you shall never see it again, And let Jack's coalpits pay for it all. Thus (dear partner) having opened my pack it resteth in your power to make Choice of the ware. You have it as I pay for it and if my stuff prove good sweet partner let me have your custom. London the 12th of April 1603

Yos^r in all assurednes

RICHARD LEVESON.

Commend me to your sister if she be there, to little waspsnest, Jack and my godson, it may be I will see you shortly.

The reference in this letter to "your Sister's mistress" is difficult to explain, unless it refers to the so-called "mother" of the maids of honour at the time Mary was at Court. From the context one might have thought it referred to Lord Montjoye's wife ; but at that time he was not lawfully married to Penelope, sister
60 of

The Leveson Letters

of the Earl of Essex and wife of Lord Rich. Charles Blount, 8th Baron Montjoye and afterwards Earl of Devonshire, had distinguished himself in the defeat of the Spanish Armada. The one blot on his career was his connection with Lady Rich (the Stella of Sir Philip Sidney), by whom he had several children, and whom he married after her divorce in 1605.

In a postscript of a letter from Francis Fitton of this date, he says: "I pray to be remembered very kindly to my niece your Sister"; and on the next page he adds one or two items of gossip he had heard respecting the new Queen's movements from one "Mr Boold . . . as though the Queen hath had lately some mishap (which is not to be spoken) and doubted could not keep the time appointed for her coming." Consequently it was uncertain "when would be the time of coronation if the first be true." He also mentions a probability of the "next term" being "put off, or at least not at London by reason of the great concourse of people, the heat season of the year and fear of the sickness."

Anne supplements this news with some of her own, which she has written on the back of the same letter:

Mr Greville [she writes] hath lost the secretaryship of Wales, it is given to a Scotsman my lord Anderson. The queen is not delivered though the report was so, only she was discontented that they in Scotland

The Leveson Letters

will not let the young prince come with her: it is thought to be the lord of Merle's [Earl of Mar's] device for his stay. The K. was much troubled at it & hath sent the duke into Scotland about the prince. The day of coronation holdeth certain. It is said from my lord of hunt: [Huntingdon] both the K. & Q. come to Coventry to Combe* Sir Jo. H. [Sir John Harrington's] & certainly to Sir R. Spencer's,† which is within 5 miles of Daventry, for so he told M^r Salter and doth make provision; he hath promised that I shall know the day certain of her coming thither.

Before leaving this period of the accession of James I. to the throne we may quote a letter from Edward Reed, who seems to have been one of the gentlemen attached to Sir Fulke Greville's retinue, and who writes for him to Anne to give her the latest news of the time. The letter is inscribed "to my much honored ladye the ladye Newdigate," and as it is dated the 14th of March must have been written in 1603-4. It runs as follows:

Madam,

* Combe Abbey, near Coventry, a residence which Lady Harrington had brought by marriage to Sir John Harrington. Princess Elizabeth was sent by the Queen to Combe Abbey when she went herself to Althorp on 25th June 1603.

† Sir Robert Spencer was created Baron Spencer of Wormleighton 21st July 1603. The Queen and Prince Henry visited Althorp 25th June 1603.

The Leveson Letters

Madam,

Sir Fulke upon his return from Warwick is much troubled with the gout in his hand and elbow, how it will increase or decrease I know not, but wish the best; his health.

The occurrences above you have (I assure myself) heard of, if not, there are great preparations for the solemn finishing the ceremonies of the coronation. As for the feast, the state thinks fit it should be spared so great and unnecessary expense, being needless.

Four Earls are to be created, three of them are these, my Lord Chancellor,* my lord Treasurer,† my lord Cecil;‡ the fourth I have not heard named. Dukes are so uncertain I leave them until they are assured; Lords very many have expectations. Having no way to manifest my respect to so worthy a friend
but

* Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper, was created Baron Ellesmere 21st July 1603, and appointed Lord Chancellor three days later; he was created Viscount Brackley 7th November 1616, and the Earldom which is said to have been promised to him was conferred upon his son 27th May 1617.

† Sir Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, was reappointed Lord Treasurer for life 17th April 1603, and created Earl of Dorset 13th March 1603-4.

‡ Sir Robert Cecil was created Baron Cecil of Essendon 13th May 1602, Viscount Cranborne 20th August 1604, and Earl of Salisbury 4th May 1605.

The Leveson Letters

but by fables, I expect pardon for them, and remain
to my ever honoured Mistress, your ladyship, Sir
John, my pretty friend and yours

A servant

EDWARD REED.

Beachampscorte the 14th of March.

Sir Richard Leveson's next letter is undated, but being
addressed to "My Lovinge Cosin the Lady Newdigate
at Arbery," it must have been written after July 1603 :

My dear sweet wife though the common report that
flieth between Arbury and London may give me just
cause of jealousy yet I will not look big upon you,
howsoever you do upon me, in hope to receive a
good Account at my coming home.

I thank you sweet wife for your love to my sister
Pen,* and although I find no ability in myself to
make a full requital yet I will entreat you to accept
this poor remembrance as a Testimony of my Thank-
fulness. And I pray you tell M^{rs} Penelope that 2 or
3 words of her handwriting unto me some times will
not weary the messenger nor discontent the receiver.
I have now nothing else to say, but do entreat you
as you love me to command anything that is mine
about Lillieshall as freely as you do at Arbury. But
because

* Mrs. Penelope Leveson, or Lusson, seems to have been a great
deal at Arbury.

The Leveson Letters

because I have nothing but wild Cattle in a park I may make you large promise and of them make no dainty, but send to your Cousin William Meyor at all times that will obey your warrant.

I intend, God willing, to come down so soon as I have despatched one little piece of a Business which I do hourly attend, and then you and your sister must shortly after prepare to visit my lodge. In the mean and ever

I will rest

faythfully yos :

RICHARD LEVESON.

Before Sir Richard writes again Anne seems to have had cause to reproach him for negligence in his correspondence with her. The terms of "husband" and "wyff" made use of read strangely to modern ears, more especially when cordial greetings are sent to the real husband and "our children."

Sweet wife, it is my fashion I must confess and my fault, if it be a fault, to be less curious with those I love than with others whom I less respect. If then my love and observance to you hath not been so often tendered by Letters as my heart could afford, Let my promise for Amendment and my open confession of my fault find pardon for the offence. One part of your last letter sheweth some distrust in you of your husband's love, which I should be very sorry for if I did not know that where perfect love is

The Leveson Letters

settled there of necessity some sparks of fear and jealousy must remain.

But if ever I be so unfortunate as to give just cause thereof, which shall never be without just precedent motives : It shall not be done by signs & figures but in that fashion that doth best beseem an open honest friend.

Till that Time come, which I hope shall never come, be assured (sweet wife) that I am and will be

Yo^r faythfull frende and lovyng cosin

RICHARD LEVESON.

I have sent your Chain though I have seen your own handwriting against it : But no more of that if you love me : I have sent also some garnets, when you see the size if you will send order to me how your stones shall be set I will do my best though I am bad at it and take it for a favour.

This 3rd of May 1604.

Commend me to my fellow John and all our children.

On the 20th of October 1604, he writes :

Sweet wife your salutations sent unto me by Sir Walter Leveson * are as welcome I assure you as they can be to any man Living and I thank you very heartily

* Probably his cousin, Sir Walter Leveson, of Ashmores, whom he mentions in his will. Sir Richard's father, Sir Walter, died in 1602.

The Leveson Letters

heartily for your kind remembrance. In these infected Times I know that you will want many things which the Country will not yield: And therefore good Nan lay any thing upon me that this place and my power can afford and use no other body but my self. In the mean and ever I will pray for your health and good deliverance and so rest

Your lovinge Cosin to his last hower

RICHARD LEVESON.

Again on the 2nd Nov. 1604 :

Sweet Nan I have sent you by this bearer an odd Ruff of a New fashion when your Sister left it for you and withal a poor Remnant of my own which I found in the Corner of a Trunk and do now entreat you to accept in good part. I long to hear of your safe delivery, which God in heaven grant you. And whensoever my love or service may stand you in any stead : as I do now bear the Title of your husband : so let me carry thus much credit with you that I will be more at your Devotion than the best of husbands are generally to the best reputed wives. And so sweet Nan with my evening's and morning's prayer I commit you to the hands of the Almighty.

Your faythfull lovinge Cousin till death

RICHARD LEVESON.

In this month of November Anne's second daughter and fourth child was born and named Lettice.

The Leveson Letters

Two months later Sir Richard corresponds with her on a matter of some delicacy concerning the expected arrival of a royal infant, for which a nurse would be required of rank combined with other essential qualifications. Anne Newdigate's claims for this post seem to have been warmly urged by her friends.

Sweet wife : in this short space of my Arrival in these parts I understand not so much touching your Affairs as I desire to know and therefore you must not look for such satisfaction from me now as I hope to send you by my next.

But falling aboard some of your friends near Chancery Lane I have now brought them to be of our side albeit they were strongly against us. (They do only take it to be my project and no other private humour,) And we are all resolved to run one Course (viz^t to sound the pleasure of the great one, how this great God send him us shall be disposed) that thereby your friends may speedily resolve for you, either to entertain the project or to have the honor of refusing it : in the mean Time your own aptness and sufficiency shall be so infused to the Q. : as I dare assure you no other will leap over your head :

I met yesterday with one of the K : physicians my familiar friend and thinking to extract something from him by way of discourse, at last he told me that there were divers Gentlewomens names put in to a

The Leveson Letters

Bill for this employment, and that the K : physicians were to examine and give their opinions of their aptness for that charge as by tasting of their Milk, etc.

This is probable, but rather than my wife shall be drawn in by this kind of election I'll walk on foot to Arbury to keep her at home.

To be short I will use all my best faculties in handling of the business, wherein I'll either Join reputation with hope of preferment or I'll do nothing. But already I can assure you that you have had very good offices done for you which shall be continued with my best help and so sweet Nan farewell

This 17th

Yos^r yos^r

of Jan : 1604 [5]

RICHARD LEVESON.

For want of paper I will write nothing of M^r Marwood, but you have been too liberal of my purse.

Good Nan send my uncle's business letter away with speed.

There seems to have been a letter before this next one, which was not sent.

Sweet wife, I wrote one Letter unto you 4 days since which hath staid with me for want of a messenger : Since which Time Ned Mainwaringe hath endeavoured to inform himself and as I think hath written unto you the substance of his Intelligence.

The Leveson Letters

I did ever believe that the old Lady had some private ends : albeit I will still pursue my end : viz^t that you may either have it to some house of your own with an absolute power or else sit still and have the honour of refusing it. This messenger is in haste therefore I say no more but desire to hear from you speedily, so in haste I rest

Yos^t

RICHARD LEVESON.

This 5th of feb. 1604 [5]

Commend me I pray you and excuse me to my fellow John that I write not unto him.

The project falls through, and Sir Richard writes again on the 21st Feb. 1604 [5] :

Sweet wife, since the writing of my last it is secretly told me that a person of good quality from whose Alliance I have sometimes taken great dependency desireth the keeping of the Child when it is born (and is like to have that she seeks) and for the avoiding of all Competency it is plotted that a woman of some ordinary respect shall be the Nurse albeit there be many suitors.

Thus much hath been privately delivered unto me and by some casual discourse I have found it to be probable. I dare not name the persons but you may conjecture whom they are. It resteth then for you wisely & speedily to resolve upon knowledge whereof

The Leveson Letters

your directions shall be followed. And so with my love and hearty wellwishing to all at Arbury I rest

Att yo^r disposition

RICHARD LEVESON.

The Q. is possessed with so good an opinion of your worth and sufficiency as within these 4 days she took occasion to speak of you.

And now we come to Sir Richard's last letter on this subject, in which we find that Anne's old friend and gossip had also been interesting himself on her behalf :

Sweet wife, I can say no more unto you than I wrote unto you in my last which I hope is come unto your hands : only my L^d Knollys hath promised to write unto you, who discerning the carriage of things desisteth now from our former course but continueth still to you passing well affected. It may therefore please you in your next to me to bestow a few lines upon him, Acknowledging some thanks unto his Lordship and declaring your mind to be as free from entertaining unworthy conditions as you were apt at first to nourish any hope that might bring probability of Advancement to your house and posterity, which you are able to express in better words and I will deliver it if you so think good with some Addition of my own.

And so sweet wife nothing doubting but your Acceptance of my love will equal any my profession

and

The Leveson Letters

and performance, all shall be as much tendered to
you as can any

And so I rest

At yo^r comāndment

RICHARD LEVESON.

This 8th of March 1604 [5].

Thus ended this matter as far as Anne was concerned. The expected royal infant, about whom there had been so much intriguing, made its appearance shortly afterwards, but only lived two years. Little Princess Mary lies in Westminster Abbey, where her small figure may be seen attired in full Court dress, reclining on her elbow upon her altar-tomb.

A few months after the date of the last letter, in the August of 1605, Sir Richard Leveson died in the thirty-sixth year of his age.

This sad event seems to have been unexpected. Sir Fulke Greville (the younger), afterwards Lord Brooke, writes to Anne for information concerning it as follows :

Madam, I thank you very much for your kind visitation when I was in these parts and will be very glad by this messenger to understand of your good health, whom I send to that purpose, and withal to entreat you to acquaint me what you hear of the manner of Sir Richard Leveson's death, and what report or opinion there is of his wealth, and how he hath disposed of his estate ; and in whom the trust

The Leveson Letters

thereof is specially left. This I desire to know for the love and honor I bare him whilst he lived ; And because therein your affection concurred with mine I must now respect and honor you so much the more : whereof I pray you rest assured. So with my very hearty commendations to yourself, Sir John Newdigate and to poor Penelope I rest

Your assured loving frend

FFULKE GREVYLL.

Good Madam let me know what he hath done for his sister Penelope.

We have a copy of Sir Richard Leveson's will, dated March 1603, made from the register now at Somerset House, from which the following extracts are taken :

In the name of the Almighty and eternal God, Amen.
I, Richard Leveson of Lillieshall in the county of Salop, knight, being of perfect health and memory, thanks be to God, and now ready addressed to a journey beyond the Seas in the service of my king and country, calling to mind the uncertainty of all earthly things and that we hold and enjoy ourselves together with all our temporal blessings but as tenants at will to our good God that gave them, and considering the troubles that many times do ensue by the indisposition of men's estate I have thereupon in the time of health resolved to settle such things as I possess

The Leveson Letters

He then recites how he had bought up certain incumbrances on his own and his father's estate, and these he now dedicates for the purpose of carrying out the objects of a lease made between himself and Sir Edward Fitton, Sir Robert Harley, and John Tirrische. In this lease, which was dated two days before his will, provision was made for raising £10,000 for such purposes as he now appoints, viz., Debts to be paid; £100 a year to Edmund Mainwaringe or John Tirrische as long as the foresaid lease continues:

Which said sum of one hundred pounds yearly during the continuance of the foresaid lease . . . shall be employed by them to such uses and purposes and such person and persons as I shall appoint unto them by some private instructions from myself.

Item I do give limit and appoint one thousand pounds parcell of the foresaid sum unto my well-beloved sister Penelope Leveson als Holbourne. Item I do give and appoint one thousand pounds to be paid unto Hugh Burnell in trust to the use and behoof of such person and persons as the said Hugh Burnell standeth bound to pay the same unto by due obligation bearing date this present month of March which said sum of two thousand pounds to my said sister and to the said Hugh Burnell I desire may be paid with all convenient speed.

Then follow various legacies of £100 to £300 to friends,

The Leveson Letters

friends, relatives, and servants, &c. &c., including £100 to his godson, Richard Newdigate. The residue of his estate he leaves,

To such person* or persons to whom I have conveyed my lands next and immediately after my decease by one pair of Indentures bearing date the three and twentieth of this instant March. . . . And of this my last Will and Testament I do ordain, constitute and make S^r Robert Harley, S^r John Leveson, John Tirrische and Samuel Bowdler my executors. In witness whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name and put my seal the xxvth day of March in the third year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord James by the grace of God King of England France and Ireland and of Scotland the xxxviiith

RICHARD LEVESON.

This will was proved on the 28th August 1605 by Sir Robert Harley, and by John Tirrische and Samuel Bowdler on the 6th December 1605.

* This seems to have been Sir Richard Leveson, son of Sir John Leveson, of Haling, or possibly Sir John himself.



CHAPTER IV

Widowhood



T now behoves us to ascertain from the meagre information at hand how Mary Fitton had been conducting herself since her downfall and disgrace.

As far as the evidence of the letters goes, she seems to have given no special anxiety to her family or her friends during this period, and, to judge by the frequent salutations sent to her by Anne's correspondents, she must have been often at Arbury with her sister.

Good old Sir Fulke Greville, in a letter dated May 1603, sends his "commendations to your good sister." Sir Richard Leveson mentions her more than once in

Widowhood

his letters in the last chapter as likely to have been at Arbury. Sir Edward Fitton, writing to his daughter Anne at a date we know by the superscription must have been later than July 1603, says :

Good Nan, God bless you and your sister as my own life, peruse this enclosure and then send it your mother I pray you. . . . Your best Gossip & honorable friend [Lord Knollys?] commandeth me to tell you he wisheth you both as much heart's ease * as to himself & every day saith he shall not be well until he see you both.

This letter is addressed :

To the Right Worshipfull the Lady Newdigatt att her house at Erbury nere Coventry.

I pray you hand this at the bull in Coventry to be sent with speed.

Having noted down these facts in favour of Mary Fitton, it is necessary to record that she is credited by Ormerod, author of the "History of Cheshire," with having had two illegitimate children by Sir Richard Leveson, Kt.

The authority for this scandal is "Sir P. L.'s M.SS."

Sir

* The heartsease or pansy was the Fitton crest, and much used by the family as an ornament or device.

Widowhood

Sir P. L. being undoubtedly Sir Peter Leycester. But Ormerod is not accurate in his facts concerning Mary Fitton's later history. He gives her Captain Lougher as her first husband, and William Polewhele as her second, when the reverse order should have been recorded.

Mr. Tyler tells us, in his "Shakespeare's Sonnets," that Lord de Tabley, on the other hand, asserts that his ancestor, Sir Peter Leycester, in his M.SS., gives the order of Mary's two husbands in their proper sequence, and that he further describes Mary's two children by Sir Richard Leveson as daughters. In any case, this blot upon Sir Richard's memory rests only on the M.SS. of Sir Peter Leycester. Whatever Mary Fitton may have been capable of, this particular scandal seems to be quite unsubstantiated, and, it is to be hoped, is untrue.

It should be borne in mind that Sir Richard Leveson died in August 1605. Up to a late date in 1603 there are constant allusions to Mary Fitton as her sister's guest at Arbury, and there is not a hint of any cause for anxiety or distress on her account, as is the case subsequently to 1605.

It hardly seems possible that so frank and genuine a man as Sir Richard Leveson shows himself in his correspondence could have been capable of writing the letters quoted in the last chapter to his cousin Anne Newdigate, addressing her as "Sweet Wyff," whilst

Widowhood

carrying on an intrigue with her only sister. Nor is it likely that Anne would have preserved these letters as valued relics under such circumstances. Again, the letter from Sir Fulke Greville (the younger), Sir Philip Sidney's friend, would hardly have been couched in the terms in which he writes to Anne for information respecting Sir Richard Leveson's death if there had been any truth in the record of so prolonged an intrigue.

In Sir Richard's will, given in the last chapter, there is no mention of Mary Fitton by name, still less of any provision for her or her problematical children, unless she was to be the recipient of the £100 a year to be disposed of by private instructions.

It is to be hoped that Sir Peter Leycester was mistaken, though it must be acknowledged that Mary's after conduct may have given rise to humiliating scandals concerning her, whether true or not.

It seems probable that, so long as Sir Edward Fitton lived, Mary was outwardly decorous. He was evidently warmly attached to both his daughters, and Anne at any rate fully returned his affection. However, Sir Edward died early in 1606, a few months after Sir Richard Leveson, and it will be seen from two letters written by Lady Fitton later that same year and early in 1607, that her daughter Mary was again in deep disgrace.

Before quoting these letters there is one more to be
79 given

Widowhood

given from good old Sir Fulke Greville, written by an amanuensis a short time before his death, which took place in 1606. Anne Newdigate seems to have had anxieties of her own at this time in regard to her husband's health, as we gather she was kept at home to nurse him.

Even when you see another's hand you may judge in what state mine is, especially if the lines come from me, and yet I cannot hope to have it better : My heart in all extremities is always the same & bent to shew itself with as true a spirit as his that hath the truest feeling of all the senses that appertain to man. Out of that right consideration and your own worthy deserving do I bestow this messenger with these lines to see you, And shall be much gladder to hear of you & yours being well than I can make you by any news I can give of mine own ability, being sometime troubled with a stitch, sometime with the heart burning, often with a cold, but most with an ill stomach which may as well come by seeing your charge prosper no better : (as by any store of Meat I eat :) and yet your fellow & I have all the care we may to cherish them. My comfort is, as they prosper your coming is hastened which I shall be glad of, As ever to do any office in me that may show a kindness to so worthy a servant to whom with your dear little ones I commend my love

Widowhood

& leave you & them to the blessed keeping of the Almighty,

From Beachampscourt Maye 26, 1606.

Yo^r M^r of Yo^r especiall favour
and ever assured freind

ffOWLKE GREVYLE.

I pray you I may be commended to M^r Whittall & M^{rs} Wood.

Sir Fulke died shortly after the date of this letter, aged eighty.

Lady Fitton (herself now a widow) alludes to his death in the letter next given. It is addressed "to my best and dearest daughter the Ladie Newdygat at Erburie":

My own sweet Nan, I pray God to bless you and all yours. I am sorry for the death of good Sir Fulke Greville, your good friend and mine; your loss is great as can be of a friend, he was a very old man, it was marvel he lived so long: no doubt but your husband and you shall find his son a very honorable gentleman, and one that will be glad of both your friendships . . . Your brother doth enter into physic to-morrow for the pain in his nose. God send it well, M^r Neithsmyth doth doubt but cure him afore Christmas, if please God. I take no joy to hear of your sister nor of that boy. If it had pleased God when I did bear her, that she and I had been buried

Widowhood

it had saved me from a great deal of sorrow and grief, and her from shame and such shame as never had Cheshire woman, worse now than ever. Write no more to me of her. Thank my pretty Jack for his token. I will wear it for his sake, and send him another afore it be long. Commend me to Moll, Dick and little pretty Letti. God bless them all. Let me be kindly remembered to your husband. Praying God to send us all well to meet I end, and will ever remain to you A kynde mother

A. ffYTTON.

I would wish you to send to your sister this enclosed to see. I have left them unsealed, you may read them and seal them. Good Nan fail not, It standeth much.

Poor mother ! what must she not have suffered to write thus about her erring daughter ! Stern as she is in the first part, her mother's heart relents in the postscript, whilst Anne, as ever, seems tender and charitable towards this sister's frailty.

Notice should be taken of "the boy" referred to in this letter in connection with Mary's disgrace. In the following year she married a certain William Polewhele, about whom there seem to have been different opinions in the family. She is known to have had a son by him, and possibly this was the boy born before her marriage. This son was living in September 1609, the date of

Widowhood

William Polewhele's will, and a daughter was born subsequently, who appears to have eventually married John Gatacre, of Gatacre in Shropshire.

Mr. C. G. O. Bridgeman, of the Chancery Bar, in his exhaustive and valuable researches when compiling a catalogue of the Arbury portraits, has ascertained that a Captain Polewhele served with Sir Richard Leveson in one of his expeditions in 1603, Sir Richard commanding the *Repulse* and Captain Polewhele the *Lyon's Whelpe*. It is also worthy of note that the manor of Perton, in Staffordshire, the place where Polewhele and his wife resided, was the property of Sir Richard. May not a confusion have arisen from these facts, and was not Polewhele the one in fault rather than Sir Richard Leveson?

Lady Fitton's next letter gives her opinion of her new son-in-law, and must have been written in 1607, soon after the date of the marriage :

My own sweet Nan I pray God to bless you and all yours. I writ to you the last week that M^r Moer was a mean for the delivery of your husband's letter to my Lord Chancellor, who gave it to his Secretary and commanded him that Chamberlain should answer it, which I did not well like. Your brother came hither upon Wednesday to see me, and was to go upon Friday back. I showed him your letter and caused him to go to Sir John Egerton, hoping he
would

Widowhood

would have done him favour in this or any other. What Dick* hath written I know not, but this he told me was his answer, that Sir John Newdigate were best to come and answer it himself. It should seem some other had affirmed it; he would not do your brother that kindness as to send for the information given against your husband that he might see it, but fell into railing against you for speaking against the marriage of your sister to Polewhele; it was out of your humor and that he was worthy her. My Lady Frances† said she was the vilest woman under the sun. To conclude they did use Dick so unkindly as he hath no great heartburning to go there since Christmas. I had the kindest messages from them that could be and that they would come see me. But Polewhele is a very "kave" [knave?] and taketh the disgrace of his wife and all her friends to make the world think him worthy of her and that she deserved no better. It is long to write all I know, I would wish your husband to come hither. Give it out I have sent for him. Let him not doubt but to find as good friends as Chamberlain. I shall have lodging for him. He shall fare as I do. Thus praying God to defend
us

* Anne's second brother, Richard Fitton.

† Lady Frances Stanley, daughter of Ferdinando, Earl of Derby, and wife of Sir John Egerton, afterwards Earl of Bridgewater.

Widowhood

us from our enemies and bless us I end, remaining
ever

Your poure, kynde, greved

Mother A. FITTON.

Pray your husband think no unkindness I did not
write to him.

If there had not been some previous scandal between Mary Fitton and Polewhele, why should her mother thus rail against the marriage? Anne too seems to have disapproved of her new brother-in-law. Probably it was not an alliance worthy of a Fitton, but under the circumstances one would imagine it ought to have been welcomed, though in silence.

Be that as it may, when once Mary Fitton became Mary Polewhele, her family seem to have accepted the situation,* whilst her great-uncle, Francis Fitton, even goes so far as to express his approval of her husband as a relative. He writes on Feb. 4, 1606-7, to Sir John :

Good Sir John Newdigate, you are very much beholden to my cousin Polewhele for his diligent care and friendly diligence in laboring about your cause contained in the Lord Chancellor's letter to you. . . .

And in his will, dated 31st March 1608, he makes a special bequest of his "usual ridinge sword beinge
damasked

* See Appendix, B.

Widowhood

damasked comonlie called a fawshion ” to his “ nephewe Mr. William Pollwheelee whoe married with my neice Mistres Marie Fitton,” and also bequeathed to him “ the best horse etc. etc. as a remembrance and token of my love to him and to my said cozen, his now wife etc.”

In this same will, in addition to some plate he bequeaths to Anne Newdigate, he makes the following bequest :

Also I further will and bequeath to her my said neice the Lady Newdegate, my bed being a bed of Downe w^{ch} now standeth in my bed chamber at London wth a cannopie of yellow velvett & curtaynes of yellow double Taffetie & a yellow silk quilte to the same bed belonging, beinge such & the same as my selfe did usually use aboute my bed when I did lye & lodge their, beinge now in the house of Mr Thoms, Shippe’s Chandler neare to the Savoye in the Strand.

In one of the last letters quoted from Lady Fitton to her daughter Anne she hopes that on Sir Fulke Greville’s death “ his son will be glad of both your friendships.” This was evidently the case, for Anne’s cousin, Philip Mainwaringe, writing to her from the Court in February 1607–8, says :

Your worthy friend Sir Fulke Greville is exceeding well whom I am very much bound unto, which I do impute to be for your Ladyship’s sake. If it please
you

Widowhood

you Madam when you next write to him to employ me for the delivery of it, I shall take it as a favour.

No wonder Philip Mainwaringe valued this privilege so highly. The life of Sir Fulke Greville (afterwards Lord Brooke) is a romance in itself. Camden says of him "he did so entirely devote himself to the study of real Virtue and Honour that the nobleness of his mind far exceeded that of his birth."

Lord Brooke never married, though, as Anthony a Wood tells us, "he lived and died a constant courtier of the Ladies."

After his death under tragical circumstances in 1628 (he having been mortally wounded by a servant who considered himself aggrieved), his body was embalmed and laid in the tomb he had had prepared in his lifetime. It is a handsome structure in black and white marble, occupying the whole of an eight-foot square building, said by Dugdale to have been originally intended for a Chapter House adjoining the Lady Chapel of St. Mary's, Warwick. Here, under a high marble canopy, rest the remains of Lord Brooke, whilst round the four sides of the flat tomb may be read the inscription composed by himself :

FULKE GREVILL
Servant to Queene Elizabeth
Concellor to King James
and frend to Sir Philip Sidney
Trophæum Peccati,

Widowhood

We must now return to Mary Fitton, whom we left safely consigned to the keeping of William Polewhele. This marriage only lasted until 1610, when she was left a widow with one son and one daughter.

We are indebted to Mr. Bridgeman's researches for the discovery of William Polewhele's will, dated 19th September 1609, and proved 23rd June 1610.

He is described as "of Perton, co. Stafford." His executors are his wife, Mary Polewhele, Sir Walter Leveson, Kt., of Ashmores, and Sir Richard Titchborne, Kt., of Titchborne. The contents of the will are a devise of lands to his wife Mary until their son attains the age of twenty-one; then to his son William Polewhele; a devise of the parsonage of Brownsover als Rugby, co. Warwick, one third to his wife, one third to his son William, and one third "to such child as my wife is now with child of," or failing such child to his son William. The residuary legatee is his wife Mary.

The child expected at the date of this will was a daughter, Mary, who afterwards married John Gatacre of Gatacre. Thus Mary Polewhele found herself again independent, though as a widow with two children.

Her sister Anne also lost her husband in this same year 1610. Sir John Newdigate died early in the spring after a trying illness. His family at this time consisted of five children—two sons, John and Richard, and three daughters, Mary, Lettice, and Anne. The last was born in 1607.

Widowhood

When Sir John's illness took a serious turn in the latter part of 1609, Lady Newdigate's maternal love and anxiety induced her to frame a petition without loss of time to Lord Salisbury, Master of the Wards. The purport of this letter was to beg for the grant of the wardship of her eldest son John, a boy of nine or ten years old.

In those days these wardships appear to have been much sought after by persons even in the higher ranks of life, owing to the emoluments they carried with them. Anne therefore had no time to lose if she would keep the control of her boy's training and property in her own hands.

We find a draft copy of this petition of hers to the Master of the Wards, evidently composed by herself. It is labelled in the handwriting of her second son as follows :

My mother's letter to my Lord Salusbury, Master of the Wards, for my brother's Wardship when my father was sicke.

We give the petition in full :

Right Hon^{ble}

Pardon this unmannerly presumption of a most unfortunate woman though not unknown and out of memory with your Lordship, yet as many my nearest friends, as my late father, Sir E^d Fitton, my brother,

Widowhood

with others too tedious to nominate, having received sundry favors from your Lord^{sp} (their merit none, mine much less;) yet being assured of your own noble heart's disposition and worthy compassion of all, I am thereby encouraged (in this heavy extremity being altogether friendless) to present my own weakness in all humble petition to your noble censure.

May it please your honor that these scrawling womanish lines may bring to your view this my humble suit. It hath pleased God to visit my husband Sir John Newdigate with sickness so that the physicians stand in doubt of his recovery or to fall into a deep melancholy: that you would be pleased to bestow the wardship of my poor boy upon me, the unfortunate mother of 5 young children all nursed upon my own breasts and now in burthen with the sixth in this uncomfortable time. Our estate is small, for when my father bestowed me in marriage, all my husband's lands in Warwickshire were assured me in jointure, which was not above £200 a year. The rest of his Lands lie in Middlesex called Brackenbury which are rated to the uttermost and are now set for £220 a year, out of which £40 a year is estated to my second son: the rest long since conveyed towards payment of debts and daughters' portions, having 3: which cometh to a very great sum for so small an estate, which being separated, I and all my poor children were utterly ruined. Hoping to
receive

Widowhood

receive the wonted favors your honourable clemency hath ever given testimony of to widows and infants, And I shall be ready to yield such gratuities either to my cousin Philip Mainwaringe, or to some other as your Lordship shall appoint : and I and mine [are] bound whilst we breathe to solicit the Almighty for your increase of honour to your own noble heart's content. Ceasing to hinder your better employed times do humbly take my leave & remain

Yo^r Lordship's well wishing oratour

A. N.

There are two parchments, both dated 28th May 1610, still existing in the muniment-room at Arbury, granting Anne's petition as regards the wardship of her son and of his lands during his minority. Before, however, this satisfactory result was obtained, Anne seems to have had misgivings as to the success of her petition. We also gather it had been surmised that so comely and attractive a widow would be likely to marry again, and the mere suggestion of such a possibility seems to have roused Anne's keen indignation. We find another paper in her own fair handwriting setting forth her doubts and fears, but to whom it was addressed we cannot tell.

In the meanwhile poor Sir John Newdigate had died, which was doubtless a happy release if the only alternative was his falling into "a deepe melancholy."

Widowhood

Anne's quaint paper runs as follows :

What I have by my Lord granting me the wardship if the marriage taking from me the thirds of my jointure being fined to the King's use, & only one third part of Brackenbury also fined to the King, the other two parts to the Lessees, so that I shall fine to the King & pay a yearly rent during the minority of the ward : for the thirds of my own which is absolutely conveyed me in jointure & shall lose so much out of my own estate, which I think was dearly purchased for me, my father Sir E^d Fitton giving £120 to my marriage ; keeping my husband, myself and a maid & two men 9 years of free will without ever having pay allowed ; my late uncle M^r Fras. Fitton undertaking £900 debts of my husband's 7 years since, out of his love to me, & paid them receiving them again to his own purse but as M^r Newd : could conveniently spare it to repay him, of which debt there is yet £200 to be paid.

So that I lose my own third part of Arbury to purchase a third out of Brackenbury and must fine and pay rent for them both : and must be at charges for the finding of the offices & whatsoever belongeth to the wardship, to be repaid when the ward is 21—if please him.

My Lord honorably granted me both the wardship of the body and land, as in my letter was included as

Widowhood

my suit to him. Therefore I will hold it if his Lord^{sp} take it not from me ; & I make no doubt but his honor's heart is too honest to eat his own word : without my desert had urged him thereto.

What my Lord shall fine me at or tax me to pay I will most willingly, but to lose this interest & right he so Nobly and freely gave : I never will whilst I breathe. But to satisfy my Lord if he be possessed (by villany of Malice to me) of my brutishness to those dear Children that I have borne of my own body and nursed of my own breasts (they never sucked other milk) therefore I had need to give good example to them lest they take of the mother.

I will enter into bonds & toll of the worthiest friends & [the] nearest kinsmen I have shall join with me, that if it should please God to call me, or that I should be so accursed a woman to marry again,* that the whole interest & commodities both of the ward's marriage & the lease of the land from the king shall go fully & wholly first to the payment of my husband's debts, his 3 daughters' portions & other legacies, which amount to but £100 more, & a reasonable portion to be provided for this child I now go withal, that the father hath not left a penny :
these

* Such love must needs be treason in my breast,
In second husband let me be accurst !

Hamlet, Act iii., Scene 2.

Widowhood

these things discharged whatsoever the remainder is to my boy Jack, being the ward. So that if I marry I will have estate in nothing but my own jointure during my life : and if I live master of my self, methinks I deserve to be Mistress of my own children, whilst they be children. This myself & friends will be bound to perform to any of worth my Lord shall nominate ; but I scorn to be engaged to any base fellow.

If a stranger had got his wardship this had been freely gone, and then the ward when he had come to full age should have had all this to have lit upon him, which sum in all is £3300 & this child I go with not provided for. Where[as] I, having it am resolved to keep them all and of my own poor estate (else will it never be raised out of ninescore pound a year unless he match fortunately above his lineage deserves), & that I have from the king to go yearly to these fore-named uses : which I think shews an ill nature in me and little affectionate love to my children, with a private purpose of my own commodity to defraud my children, for whose sakes only God spareth me in this world. For though the ward be my oldest son & dearest Child, having but one son more, yet the rest are all of the same breed, & I think there is a conscience they should have what their father left them ; which were they not my own I being left his executrix I should

Widowhood

to the uttermost of my powers see faithfully performed.

I shall mar my marriage by this means, which it seems some report I much gape after. But since so many devils go in shapes of men that my judgment can not know the one for the other ; God deliver me for ever being tied to any of them ! For if I look for an honest man or a true friend, I must say as one of the Roman Emperors did, I must go to the graves for them, for they are all dead & buried.

Good, brave Anne ! Though her sentences are involved, her meaning is as clear as day. Whatever may have been the destination of this paper, and whether it went forward in these exact words or no, she appears to have triumphed in her object.

Her cousin, Philip Mainwaringe, who had a post at Court, writes to her on this subject :

Good Madam, I am sorry it was my ill fortune to be absent when I should have done you a friendly office, but your Letter to my Lord was so passionate & moving as you did not need any better means for the obtaining your desire. Yet in my hearing (my Lord speaking of Sir John's death & your pitiful Letter) three or four great persons who I named to M^r Whitall * moved my Lord very earnestly for
your

* Anne's faithful steward.

Widowhood

your good, who answered he had & would respect you. When M^r Whitall came to take leave with me he told me your Lady^{sp} had made choice of me in your Letter as your kinsman who (if pleased my Lord) you desired should receive the benefit his Lord^{sp} would appoint out of it, which kind respect I fear I shall never merit but will infinitely acknowledge.

My Lady's Grace wrote to my Lord in the behalf of my Lord Harrington & his Lady for the Wardship ; His answer was you had a grant of it already, & he was assured if her Grace did know the small value of it, she would not have written for it. Therefore since my Lord is assured of the meanness of it by your own Letter you may do me a favor, if you please, to second that point in my behalf when you next write to my Lord ; because you have more power over me than you can challenge of a stranger in whom you have no interest. Thus ceasing your trouble I ever rest

to be disposed of by you

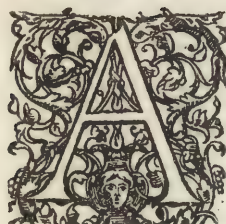
PH : MAINWARINGE.

Fro. Court this 26
of March 1609 [10].



CHAPTER V

Friendship



ALL we know of Anne Newdigate's life as a widow only proves that she lived, as ever, first and foremost for her children. We also gather she was an excellent woman of business, and was admirably aided by her faithful servants William Henshawe and William Whitall.

Sir John Newdigate showed his implicit confidence in his wife's loyalty and capacity by leaving her the sole executrix of his will. After his death in 1610, when Anne made her own will, it was mainly a copy of her husband's, although as years went by she had occasion to make later additions to it.

Friendship

In 1614 she entered into an agreement on parchment with a sculptor, by name William White, to erect a monument in alabaster to her husband's memory in Harefield Church, where it may be seen to this day. Sir John kneels on one side of a desk clothed in armour, Lady Newdigate (also kneeling) on the other side, habited in flowing black robes with a coif and veil. Below kneel their five children, the two sons facing one way and the three daughters the other. There is no record in baptismal or burial registers of a sixth child, although Anne makes so much capital out of its expected advent in her petition for the wardship of her eldest son. Probably it was stillborn at the time of her trouble. The inscription on the monument is in both Latin and English. We here give the latter version :

Here Wisdom's Jewell, Knighthood's Flower
Cropt off in prime and youthful hower
Religion, meekness, faithfull love
Which any Hart might inly moove
These ever liv'd in this Knight's brest
Dead in his death with him doth rest
So that the marble selfe doth weep
To think on that which it doth keep
Weep then who ere this Stone doth see
Unless more hard than Stone thou bee.

We must now return to the early days of Anne's widowhood, and having recorded her indignant protest at the possibility of her being "soe accursed a Woeman as to marry

Friendship

marry again," it may be interesting to note what temptations she may have had to belie her own words.

We have a large budget of letters to her from a Francis Beaumont, a scholar and a gentleman, afterwards Master of the Charterhouse, who was evidently an ardent admirer of hers and at the same time a warm advocate of the suit of another. This other is only known to us as "my cosyn Saunders."

Francis Beaumont was the second son of Nicholas Beaumont, of Cole Orton, in Leicestershire, and of Anne, daughter of William Saunders, of Welford, in Northamptonshire. His younger brother, Sir Thomas Beaumont (one of King James's numerous knights), married an heiress, who brought him Stoughton Grange, in Leicestershire. Sir Thomas also had a house at Bedworth, in Warwickshire, inherited from his father, and Francis Beaumont, who was unmarried, seems to have spent much time at one or other of his brother's houses.

Bedworth, now a grimy mining town, is only three miles from Arbury, and well within easy reach for personal intercourse. It is difficult in these days to imagine where a house suitable for people of condition could have been situated.*

Francis

There is an old house at Bedworth, still called Saunders Hall, which is very likely to have come to Sir Thomas Beaumont through his mother, and is the only dwelling at all probable to have been his residence there.

Friendship

Francis Beaumont's letters are wordy and overflowing with compliments. They are written with great care in a very neat hand, but though he gives us the place whence he writes and the date of the month, he omits the year, so that it is often difficult to arrive at their exact period.

Anne Newdigate seems to have been in great favour with the whole Beaumont family, including the married daughters, one of whom was Lady Ashburnham and another Lady Dixie.

If we take the earliest letters as having been written about the time of Sir John's last illness, the writer must have been then nearly sixty years of age. Anne had evidently a due respect for his judgment, and consulted him when penning her "passionate and moveinge" petition to Lord Salisbury, for there is a much reduced copy in his neat handwriting. We are, however, inclined to think she sent the one given in the last chapter, evidently her own composition, and labelled as such by her son Richard.

The following letter seems to have been one of the earliest from Francis Beaumont to Lady Newdigate, as he refers in the postscript to an invalid, who was probably her husband, and consequently dates from 1609 to 1610:

My best lady and of all ladies that ever I knew mine
only best and most noble Lady, albeit I am at this
present employed in the behalf of an old servant
of mine to commend a suit of his unto my

100

Lord

Friendship

Lord of Southampton : yet not for any business to any Lord or Lady, or to all the Lords or Ladies in the world, shall the least time overpass me wherein I may acknowledge the last duty I owe unto my best and most worthy Lady.

And now I appeal from all judgments unto the only judgment of my thrice-honored Lady so discreet and so wise, whether she would not think me most unthankful, void of all gentility, admiration and honesty, if for her last letter only (though never had been precedent cause) I should not acknowledge myself most infinitely bound unto her for ever. But now I am occasioned for other haste to play Orlando, not Furioso, but di Lasso* who sometime, when it is thought that he would end his song with some grave cadence and very long note, doth of a sudden cut off all with a quaver or crotchet, his brevity better expressing the pathetical conceit of the ditty than the longest musical cords he could devise to set down. Thus wishing all health & happiness to my best Lady and all hers, I humbly take my leave and rest. Yours

most infinitelie bound and
readie to be commaunded

FRANCIS BEAUMONT.

Bedworthe the viii of July.

If

* Orlando di Lasso, the leading composer (next to Palestrina) of the 16th century. He died at Munich, 1594.

Friendship

If Coventry could have afforded either pomegranates or Lemons, I had sent them unto my friend, but what I could get that I send, and my prayers for him to God, and my man to bring me word how he is. I doubt not but he shall speedily recover since God doth make him a Patient under so kind and wise a Physician.

From another letter we quote a paragraph because it refers to Anne's five children under the emblem of a "sinkefoy" (cinquefoil), an heraldic term for the pansy or heartsease, which was the Fitton crest.

Your fair & worthily beloved Sinkefoy I most kindly salute, which being like unto a heartsease hath three leaves of one sort and two of another. I pray God from my very heart, that they may for ever bring ease of heart to that thrice-worthy Root that bare them.

Francis Beaumont is writing from Stoughton, and adds:

My Brother, my Sister, my Niece Ashburnham & my Niece Beaumont desire that their love may very effectually be commended unto you.

In the next letter, written from Bedworth, he makes a request to his "Most honorable Lady and worthy of me above all Ladies to be honored," with endless apologies for his boldness, until at length he comes to the point.

Friendship

My suit (good Madame) is that you will please to bestow upon me as an ensign of your favour the copies of your two letters unto my Lord Treasurer which you read unto me in your closet. . . . I protest unto your Lady^{sp} by that dutiful love I owe you (for a better Saint will I not swear by) that I will in such sort use them as you never shall have cause to reprove me and as dearly esteem them as a most rare jewel of gold etc. etc.

These letters were probably those given in the last chapter, as Lord Salisbury, Master of the Wards, was also Lord High Treasurer up to the time of his death in 1612. Anne has preserved a copy of her discreet answer :

Sir I know no fault in you worthy of condemnation therefore cannot judge you. Mine own imperfections I confess them many ; therefore my worth no way challenging such admiration. For the copy of those letters you desire, I must not deny them you. Yet I well know they can be of no use to you : & the not so doing—sending of them—will be no prejudice, for although I shewed them to your worthy self, it was the more to make him honored that made me so much bound to him ; that would so Nobly accept the poor weak & undesired solicitation of An unfortunate Woman his honorable heart right censured. But how they might be if published to the world's

Friendship

eyes I know not. Excuse me till I next see you. For as you are pleased to respect me in an higher estimation than I have or can deserve ; yet I hope never to give just cause to make you repent that you grounded your good opinion of her that is resolutely determined to continue

Yo^r faithfull well wisheing frend

Let my love & best thanks I pray you be conveyed to your all worthiest Brother & his good Lady.

Francis Beaumont, though so near as Bedworth, sends an answer to this letter a day or two later, beginning, as usual, full of apologies, lest he should offend "my so noble and worthy a Ladie," and going on to say :

Where your Ladyship writes that I missense your meaning touching the letters you read unto me, because therein your purpose was to show me the honorable disposition of my Lord, I mistake the matter nothing at all. But let my good Lady remember that I could not have discerned the grant of that honorable Lord, without seeing the thrice-worthy request of my honorable Lady, wherein I can commend no less the wisdom and manner in requesting, than your Ladyship doth the honor and bounty in granting ; and therefore give me leave (I pray you) as much to honor my dear Lady for the one as my good Lady doth honor and thankfully requite her good Lord for the other. If you think

Friendship

that by wringing mine eye on the one side I make things that be single seem to be double, let me alone (good Madame) with that which is mine own, for mine impartial judgment in this matter doth direct me with such a straight line as I know I can not be deceived.

In spite of this letter the writer adds in a postscript:

This day I purpose (God willing) to see my good Lady, and so to take my leave, my brother & my sister determining the week following to go into Leicestershire, and then to give her the infinite thanks for those honorable courtesies which never I can deserve nor requite during my life.

Bedworth y^e 2 of Februarie.

In the interview thus foreshadowed, Francis Beaumont seems to have obtained the loan of the desired letters, or rather to have copied them from Anne's dictation. In returning them he writes as follows :

My best and of all most worthy to be my best Lady, I was unquiet within myself until such time as I had performed your commandment and so have now sent you both your letters here enclosed. If they appear not of such purity and brightness as they were when you delivered them, you must or blame or pardon the rusty treasury of my memory from whence nothing is distilled that loseth not some of

Friendship

the lustre it had when it was first infused. My ground work had been more sure if I durst have presumed to have borrowed your copies : but I had no great mind to entreat them because I found in you so little mind to lend them ; yet as they are there is not (in mine opinion) anything amiss. Your own they be and yours as much as your own children be yours, in this only different, that your children were born of your body and these pretty inanimate creatures born of your brain : yet not still born, but born still to reprove poor me. I utterly disclaim from any alteration in them, unless in some one or two places, I have added either if or and : which is an addition like unto two little pins, pricked into a fair and well made velvet gown, the same neither altering fashion nor substance ; but yet peradventure making some one or two pleats sit more closely than they did before.

That you so seriously and so often repent your sin in giving me these two jewels (for no less do I esteem of them than of precious jewels) God forgive you this trespass and I do, wishing you would still load me with more of these sins, until I also find in myself some motion of repentance. You can not bestow your favours upon any the best friends you have that shall be more kindly accepted than of me, and your most loving friend my niece, who being a great collector of monuments will, I know, in her

Friendship

book of records reserve a prime station for my Lady Newdigate's letters. And now methinks I may claim some indifferent good place (a little before behind the door) in your friendship, by means of this new alliance with us, your lady^{sp} being of late married into my niece's sisterhood.* Reprove me no more (most worthy Lady) for making your letters too common: for had they been the fairest and finest virgins in the world I could not have kept them more chastely than I did. The first whereof I protest from me was neither seen nor heard of any creature living: the second indeed I have rehearsed, and I will tell you upon what first occasion I was moved. A knight (not unknown to you) commended much a great Lady (preferring her above all others) for her fair writing and most excellent inditing.

When should I have spoken if now I had been silent? I could upon this offer no less than compare my best Lady with her, who I know in these fair graces by many degrees did far excel her? For what should I have done (good Madame)? Either I must have been mute and have laid my finger upon my lips, or like a natural fool have told † [counted]

twenty

* The agreement between Lady Ashburnham and Lady Newdigate to call each other "sister."

† Stay'd it long?

While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

SHAKESPEARE.

Friendship

twenty for want of other speech, or else have said that, which I did say, which was as hot as a burning coal in my mouth, before I had uttered it. After this my niece drawing me aside (for good women take great pleasure in hearing other good women commended) entreated me very earnestly to bestow of her a copy of one of your letters. It is enough (quoth I) that you hear one of them: a copy whereof (as much as I love you) rather than you shall receive of me, I will cut out the tongue wherewith I utter it. What better observation of duty towards my best Lady than this could I have used? But you say I praised you. Therein I offended in deed, but the same was in the scant and not in the exceeding part. O miserable world, wherein well disposed minds are rebuked for observing rules of charity, and for commending of virtue! Madame, my resolution is and never shall be altered that my heart shall sooner be taught to leave panting than my tongue brought to leave praising where respectively I bind myself in any observant duty. And here I could tell you a pretty tale of my cousin Saunders, which I will forbear until I see you, and yet this much in the meantime to bring me in better remembrance of the rest; he blames me more for penury than you do for plenty, saying it is pity that so worthy a subject should ever be praised by such a barren and worthless tongue as this of mine. . . .

Friendship

No pardon I will crave for the tediousness of my letter, for I must have a pardon *ex officio* because long tales and long letters belong to a comforter without limitation and most convenient it is I now use mine office to my dearest Lady to make her way seem shorter while she is travailing through the wilderness. I pray God send you all the happiness your own heart can desire and as much good fortune to your worthy children as he can wish that loves them dearly. So I humbly take my leave, etc. etc.

In this letter we find the first mention of "Cosyn Saunders," whose suit seems to linger on for a year or more. The only member of the Saunders family who would have been a likely aspirant to the hand of Anne at this time is Matthew Saunders, of Shankton, in Leicestershire. He was the grandson of Francis Saunders, of Welford, in Northamptonshire, and a great-nephew of Francis Beaumont's mother. He had married Margaret Skipwith, daughter of Henry Skipwith, of Keythorp, but was left a widower in 1605 with five children. He was knighted in 1617, and died in 1623.

On the back of the last letter given above Anne has made a rough copy of the answer she sent her wordy correspondent, in which a gleam of humour appears where she alludes to that miscalled "barren tongue" if his speech were anything like as lengthy as his letters.

Friendship

These many testimonies [she writes] of the continuance of your friendly respect of me can not be by me so worthlessly esteemed as silently to receive them and neglect A little thanks (though too poor A requital for so rich A courtesy), and thereby also heap upon myself that which I hate to be burdened withal, having been ever precisely careful rather to cherish A good opinion conceived of me than to give just cause to extinguish it, knowing it much easier to get a friend than to keep one. The adventure of the loss of any such in my record registered would be to me most troublesome. How precious the contrary in my heart's thoughts held I leave to his judgment, whose barren tongue is seldom sparing in discovering his much more reverent conceit than deserved of your assured well wishing friend

A. N.

If this is a specimen of Anne's usual style of letters, one can but wonder if so involved and stilted a production ever found a place of honour in the "booke of recordes" of that collector of "monuments," Lady Ashburnham. It must be confessed that Anne's compositions are more attractive when they come from her heart, and are both "passionate and moveinge."

The next letter we give from Francis Beaumont omits both the date and the place whence he wrote :

Friendship

Most noble and worthy Lady, I sent yesterday unto you a blank paper that your Lady^{sp} might conceive thereby that I held myself so infinitely bound unto you for your most excellent goodness, as that out of my little wealth of words I could not by any means offer that duty for which most deservedly I am indebted unto you during my life. In which conceit of mine (if I did amiss for dutiful love is ever full of fearful care) your own pretty story of the Canopy and mine of Timanthes* for covering affections with curtains may be my all sufficient warrant. Since which time I have read your little doubtful mot and well understand what you meant by received, but what by deceived I cannot imagine. Unwarily I see, I am fallen into a labyrinth out of the which if my dear Lady do not direct me, he whom of her gracious favour she called her comforter, was never himself in so much need to be comforted, I pray God my best Lady do not take my no ill meaning in some evil part. For I protest unto your Ladyship if there were but one drop of blood in me (were the same never so near my heart) that

* Timanthes lived about 400 B.C. He was a Greek painter of Sicily. He is known mainly as the painter of the "Sacrifice of Iphigenia," in which Agamemnon conceals his uncontrollable grief by covering his head with his mantle.—("The Century Cyclopædia of Names.")

Friendship

that would procure any undutiful thought against my so excellent & worthy a Lady, I could never sleep quietly before I had let it out, etc. etc.

Then as a postscript :

The ingredients within your little gilded pill is still in my taste more bitter than any aloes.

It is a pleasant variation from these complimentary effusions when we come upon a little local news such as follows in another letter :

Your lady^{sp's} pleasure was that I should write unto you the occasion of my brother's so sudden departure and speedy appearance upon commandment at the Court. The matter was unknown unto my brother himself and likewise unto Sir H. Hastings and therefore may be conjectured, but cannot truly be reported by any other. The manner of their sending for was this. A letter was directed unto them both from the Council sent by a pursuivant, and commanding that they should without delay make their personal appearance at the Court, there to understand the king's farther pleasure concerning affairs pertaining unto himself. Whether the cause do proceed from some complaint of the Green cloth touching provision (about the which this country hath been often and for many years grievously troubled) or that the king please to employ them in quenching

Friendship

quenching the wild combustion, that, flaming out of our two great houses, hath for this two years overheated all Leicestershire (the one of these Gentlemen being an assured friend to the one house the other a near kinsman unto the other) or whether he mean to use their service touching this great sale everywhere reported—the truth hereof no man knoweth, and in roving men do more often miss than hit the mark. Yet of this I am assuredly persuaded that it can be no matter of dangerous consequence unto themselves, being both as they are of such respective carriage.

Your honorable and worthy friend Sir John Grey* liveth : at whom though envy daily bark, yet I hope, she shall never have power to draw one drop of blood from him. The same day I came from Arbury he was at the assizes at Leicester, where he was merry and laughed as men do that are not dead.

Your most honorable and thriceworthy sister as fair as beauty itself, more fine and pretty than spark of velvet and as witty as Pallas, is, (and so I long wish she may be) in very good health. Worthy she is to be loved of that worthy Lady that loves her and she that loves her, as worthy to be loved as any Lady in the world. Of these two sisters I have vowed never to speak without some of their excellent and most
worthy

* Sir John Grey, eldest son of Henry, Lord Grey of Groby, died *vitâ patris* in October 1611.

Friendship

worthy embellishments : so I think I do now, and so will I ever do hereafter. As occasion serves your Lady^{sp} shall hear from me again, being very glad that by this opportunity, a way is laid open unto me to do a double duty, unto my best and most honored Lady etc. etc.

The beginning of the last paragraph must, from the context, refer to Lady Grey, who always addressed Anne as "Deare Sister" in her letters, and not to Mary Polewhele, as might naturally be supposed.

Francis Beaumont fulfils his promise of writing again, and dates his letter this time from Bosworth (where he was a guest of his niece Lady Dixie) "y^e xx of March":

My last letter (most worthy Lady) engaged me in a bond of duty to write unto you again, if occasion were offered to any such purpose. My brother is now returned from the Court, but so many things have happened concerning his journey, as may better serve for half a day's talk than to give but proportionable matter to the contents of an ordinary letter, And therefore I hold it best that these occurrences be not touched until I see my best Lady, which should be (God willing) in these holidays, were I sure that my presence might not become more troublesome than deserving to be welcome unto you. For I know about this time is your great preparation to offer your best and highest sacrifice unto your best and highest

Lord,

Friendship

Lord, wherein many desire rather privacy than to be conversant with company : and I know not whether your Lady^{sp} hath invited any friends unto whom if myself be a stranger, though I be but one, yet may I be too many by one for such an appointment, having ever hated importunity and inhumanity as the two most extreme enemies unto civility.

Within four days after my last letter Sir John Grey was at Stoughton, where he spake much good of her whom I most honour, for what can any man speak but good of goodness itself?

Madame, if you had been born but under some fortunate Planet, it might have made you so well beloved as you are, but that had then proceeded but from blind fortune : but mine Ephemerides saith, that you were born under a most blessed Planet, which makes you rightly deserve to be loved of many, and that proceeds only from virtue. Of this no more at this time, but never too much at any time.

My brother Thomas Beaumont is sick, and I fear with some danger, my nearest kinsman is very extreme sick, one of my dearest friends hath the plague in his house, and I am now going to visit another friend that lieth in dying. When so many near and dear to me are so ill, I know and feel that I myself am not well. Pardon this letter, which is a monster, begotten by haste and brought forth by grief, yet accompanied with the same dutiful affection

Friendship

that all the former have been and subscribed as all the rest etc. etc.

My nephew Dixie and my niece commend their best and most kindly affected love unto your good Ladyship.

My many griefs (good Madame) do move me to make many suits unto God : in which I forget not to pray earnestly for the health and happiness of you and yours, and shall receive no small comfort, if I know when I come to Bedworth that you are all well, and for the same cause especially have sent mine own man with this letter, that by him I may understand how you all are in this queasy* and sickly time.

* Sick with nausea. (See Johnson's Dictionary, folio edition, 1755.)



CHAPTER VI

Courtship



IN the ensuing letters "my Cosyn Saunders'" suit is more openly advocated by his near kinsman, Francis Beaumont, although the latter would seem to have been an ardent admirer of Anne Newdigate himself.

He writes from Stoughton on the 17th of January (probably about 1611 or 1612) as follows:

Most noble and worthy Lady, In my so often access and many letters unto your Ladyship if either hereafter or at this time I commit any crime (for much speech is seldom without desert of reproof) I will

Courtship

first of all for them all entreat my good Lady to pardon mine errors, For desiring most earnestly to have my Lady Newdigate not only my good Lady as she is to all others, but mine only best Lady above all others, I will neither spare words nor works, suit nor service, that may procure me her good opinion. Ever since I last see your Ladyship I have been with my dying Pelican* where I have wrought a miracle in somewhat reviving dead affections that lay buried for years seven foot within the earth under a dead body.† Here I know my good Lady can not well understand me before she see me, and when I write I love sometime to leave behind me some obscurity. For as in entertainment it argueth indiscretion to set all upon the table at the first course, and not to reserve something for the second: so in writing to so wise and excellent a Lady as yourself, he that leaveth not a handle in his former letter to take hold of in his next talk aimeth not right (methinks) as he should at the mark he shoots at. I will set on a little more, and yet leave sufficient for a second and third course. I have contended with Mr. Haake in painting Phoenix and was not much inferior unto him even in the same lineaments that
by

* "My Cosyn Saunders," as explained hereafter.

† May not this refer to Matthew Saunders' first wife, who died in 1605?

Courtship

by his running art he endeavoured to express her. And what if I should say that I think I did somewhat excel him? For he wrought but to the eye and I to the soul; he but painted upon a card and I imprinted upon a heart; he set forth but a dead beauty but I discovered a living beauty, and therewithal a mind replenished with such virtues as can come under no skilful hand to be described by a pencil. In this manner I have spoken of my Phoenix unto my Pelican. Let not (most worthy Lady) his labour hereafter become loss, nor his pains repentance; which must happen if the end hereafter prove as hapless as the beginning hitherto hath been hopeless. Last of all, and then for this time I leave you. Absolve (most fair and dear Lady) this letter from all suspicion of imposture, protesting unto you, that neither my tongue herein hath spoken nor my hand hath written anything, which my heart hath not ingenuously thought before. And so offering my service to be disposed by you I rest most ready

at your commandment

FRANCIS BEAUMONT.

Salute I pray you in my name your Sister, whom the less I know and the more friendly she accepteth it, the more am I beholden unto her.

This is the first allusion we have in these letters to Mary Polewhele, who appears to have been staying with

Courtship

her sister at Arbury. Possibly she was an advocate for Lady Newdigate's second marriage, Mary Polewhele herself being on the point of making a fresh choice on her own account.

The next letter is written from what Francis Beaumont calls "a sicklie bodie," and is therefore doleful in its tone. He begins :

It is a comfort in great languishment
To be bemoaned with compassion kind
And mitigates the anguish of the mind.

Never was rule so plainly confirmed by example as my Lady's most gracious and comfortable letter hath approved this saying of the Poet to be true : wherein I see that noble spirit of hers (which is her second and worthiest self) possessing such variety and copy of wit as can in most humility show greatest . . . * While in disabling herself to comfort she hath proved unto me that she is the best comforter that ever comforted me since I first breathed air. . . .

My near kinsman that I left sick was my cousin Saunders in english, in latin the dying Pelican. I could wish that instead of this sickness he had my Queen's evil, which is no less in her power to cure than to cause ; for the recovery of that disease is but to hang an Angel about the party's neck which must

not

* Torn off by seal.

Courtship

not be fastened with a ribbon, but with my Queen's own arms, her fingers being crossed one within another. If wishing were not the sustenance of fools and that men of better wit might not find some better food to feed on, I could wish and wish again. Discover not my little conception, for if you find out this riddle, it may be that I shall have the Sphinx's punishment. I rather desire not to be understood than to be reprehended. My yesterday's sickness stirred up all the humours in my body, and in my soul affection and honesty have appointed a duel. Pardon me now (my best and most excellent Lady) or never pardon me, or rather pardon me now and ever pardon me; for this letter stands in need of a pardon of course, which being written from a sickly body, is like unto a sick man's dream hanging together like locks of wool upon a company of bramble briars. And so wishing that my best and dearest Lady may never want such worthy comfort (when she needs) as she hath most bountifully and honorably bestowed upon my need, or better wishing that she may never be grieved, nor never need any comfort at all, I commit her unto his tuition, to whom I will for ever pray for her most blessed and happy estate. Bedworth the xxii of March etc. etc.

And then as a postscript :

I would your Lady^{sp} did know how suddenly and
strangely

Courtship

strangely I was cured of my fit the last night, which was in such sort as my Lady never heard the like, nor any that dwells betwixt this and Antipodes.

The next letter has no date, but may well have followed the previous one :

Most honorable and my ever best Lady, not anything that came into my hands these many years was so welcome unto me, as your good Lady^{sp's} last letter. For having before more unadvisedly than wisely hazarded so worthy a Lady's favour upon a mum-chance, my diseased soul (after I had perceived mine error) could find no rest until such time as your most comfortable electuary was received. Many occasions, I know, might have been taken, which without vehement enforcing would of themselves have easily fallen upon a hard construction : and then if my Queen had said, the hare's ears be horns, horns they must have been, (whatsoever matter they had been made of) and where had I been placed, but amongst the number of the unfortunate beasts, that upon condemnation of life were discharged ?

But I see such is that honorable and courteous disposition of mine excellent Lady as will not suddenly take exception against him that truly honors her, though occasion might seem to be offered, and such her most divine sympathising spirit, as can discern

Courtship

intention, before almost it come into action, which opinion of mine, confirmed by that noble desert of hers, if the same shall draw me into Palamon's* error, I will live and die in heresy, and never revoke by recantation. . . .

When you see my Counsellor, your only sister, commend I pray you unto her mine affectionate love, but not my quintessential, for that is become a confined recusant, having disavowed sacrifice unto all living temples, save only unto the living temple of the fairest and dearest deserving Cynthia.†

So craving pardon and wishing never to commit offence I rest

Yours most humble
to be commanded

FRANCIS BEAUMONT.

I have sent unto my pretty Love my best black cock, hatched in a raven's nest, and desire your good Lady^{sp} to speak for me, that I may be her best love until her black cock crow and I will desire it no longer.

To judge from the message to Mary Polewhele in this letter, the writer must have made considerable advances
in

* The reference here must be to the Knight's Tale in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales."

† Another name for Diana, goddess of the moon,

Courtship

in his acquaintanceship with her, and one is led to believe that she was aiding him with her counsel in the matter of "Cosyn Saunders'" courtship.

In our next letter Francis Beaumont refers to an oration he had made before the King eight years previously, which shows us the date must be at least 1611, if not later, James I. having come to the throne in 1603. He writes from Stoughton on the 3rd of August :

My service remembered to my best and most honored Lady, I have sent unto your good Lady^{sp} with this letter the oration that I made unto the King, which cannot of your part be so friendly entertained as of mine it is willingly offered, being though not the first, yet the first of my fruits that ever my best Lady pleased to command. When it was alive and breathed by my breath, it revived both fortune and favour : fortune by allowance of the King : favour by grateful acceptance of the two noble men who entreated me to perform that service. But honor it never had until this present day. For though before it was fortun'd and favoured, yet was it never honored, until it came to be bounded between the honorable and thrice-happy hands of my most noble Lady more worthy to be honored than all the Ladies in the world. So now your Lady^{sp} having it (as it were taken up again out of the ground after eight years burial) if you shall suffer some skilful coroner to

Courtship

revise the members thereof, there may haply appear a broken leg, a broken arm, or a broken neck, though at the first by advantage of haste it departed the world quietly with a suspectless sepulture. My treasury (good Madame) hath been unroofed this twenty year, and so lying open upon wind and weather, whatsoever now comes out of it can not be otherwise than either mouldy or rusty. Such as it is, yours now it is, and mine once it was ; you have commanded and I have obeyed : and rather would I in this, or any other thing, lose the opinion of mine own wit, than not yield obedience to her will whom I honor so unfeignedly.

My cousin Saunders commends his service unto you, and tells me oft that I will lose your good favour for fault of writing : but I tell him that I will never lose it for any such fault, though well it may be that I may lose it for fault in writing, my writing many times wanting wit, but never will to express the duty I deservedly owe to my so worthy and noble a Lady. I assure you and swear unto you by my vowed service, that he loves you dearly, and hath in him all the symptoms belonging to that languishing disease. At the same time I was about this letter Sir George Belgrave coming to us to Stoughton to dinner, told me that my Lady Grey, your sister, was brought to bed of a young Sir John Grey, and reported unto me withal (which was strange news to my brother, my

sister

Courtship

sister and to myself) that since our last coming out of Warwickshire, your lady^{sp} hath been sick of the measles. Of your good recovery I should be very glad to hear ; the testimony whereof, if it were confirmed with your own most worthy hand, would be unto me a favour of treble value ; which though often I have desired to see for more excellency therein than you are desirous to hear, yet was I never so desirous as at this present, when it may witness unto me that my best Lady is as well as she was, when I last left her. I can but pray unto the all Bountiful Lord to send much safety to you and yours ; unto whose favourable protection committing you I humbly take my leave and rest etc. etc.

Then follow the inevitable postscripts :

I must entreat your Lady^{sp} to pardon me, though the number of my lines do far exceed the proportion I allotted unto them, when I first began to write, for before I had sealed up this letter my sister Berkley* was come to Stoughton ; who hearing that I was writing unto you, entreated me very earnestly to commend her love unto your kind acceptance, and to make known how glad she would be of your better acquaintance. When she comes into Warwickshire,

* His sister Catherine married, first, Anthony Biron ; and secondly, Henry Berkeley.

Courtship

shire, she saith, she will visit you : and if you come into Leicestershire, she desires that she may see you, and that you shall be a most welcome guest unto her.

About ten o'clock at the night came in your sister Ashburnham, who hearing my Lady Newdigate but once named, fell into such a discourse of love & kindness, of kindness and love, of courtesy and compliment, of thing and things, as neither I can express nor this paper well contain. At the last she concluded that I must needs convey unto you with all titles of amity a certain conjuration, which she saith can not be understood till you two meet together. God help men, when such fair ladies turn conjurors. I have sent the same unto you.

My nephew of Coleorton* who promised me the buck, in mine absence is gone into Lincolnshire, where he means to tarry this month, or he knows not how long himself. Now am I going to catch him, who is wilder than any buck in his park. If I speed (as I hope I shall) I will then discharge some little part of the debt I owe unto my best Lady, to whom I am indebted in all service I can for ever. And so I wish you good rest, for now it is an hour past midnight,
both

* Sir Thomas Beaumont, of Cole Orton, the head of the family, succeeded, on the death of his father, Sir Henry, in 1607. He was created Viscount Beaumont, and died in 1625.

Courtship

both by the clock and stars, and by my narrow-eyed scribbling that write thus away.

The nature of the "conjunction" here said to be enclosed from Lady Ashburnham to Lady Newdigate remains unexplained, but it may have had something to do with "Cosyn Saunders'" wooing, as the "collector of monuments" was also an advocate on his behalf.

The following letter is from her and tells its own tale :

Dear Sister

Because pity is thought to be some ease in calamity & that I am so well assured of your love & kind respect towards me, as I know you will bemoan me, I must needs send you word how ill & painful a Journey I had after we parted, falling sick in the mid way & had much ado to get home where I take (as I told you) small pleasure or contentment in this little solitary prison that I live in, but being here out of hope to enjoy my friends presence I often please my fancy with calling them to mind amongst the chiefest of whom your self is never forgotten. And now out of mine own griefs give me leave a little compassionately to remember that honest kind gentleman your faithful friend & my kinsman, whose restless mind makes him more unhappy than either loss in his estate, or pain of body can do, because it being that more excellent & sensible part is of so much the greater force to perplex him, whilst his desire &

affection

Courtship

affection (which being satisfied are the motives to bring him contentment) are in him continually tossed between the rackets of hope & despair, who honoreth you so far as to acknowledge you worthy of much greater preferment in marriage than with himself, yet being of council with his own heart, he saith none can love you more: his worth & merit is better manifested daily by himself & conceived by your witty judgment, than can be expressed by me, though I think as much good of him as any friend he hath doth. You need not think I am bribed, because I speak but sparingly of that you know to be his due; & yet I will not so far be led with kind regard towards him, as I forget my firm love to you, whose greatest happiness & best content I wish as mine own, but the means I am not so well able to judge of as yourself & therefore will leave him & his future fortunes to your good respect & consideration, commending my faithful affection to your well deserving self & so rest

Your ever loving sister

ELIZA : ASHBORNHAM.

To my very worthye and much esteemed sister

Y^e Lady Nudegate d.d.

We give Francis Beaumont's two next letters in full, lengthy as they are, because they show us the curious admixture of his own ardent admiration for his "best

Courtship

Ladie" with an equally impassioned advocacy of his "Cosyn Saunders'" suit, which seems to have been finally rejected after a year's courtship :

My best Lady

I received of late a letter from my best beloved cousin, having before written unto him with as forcible reasons as I could, to persuade him to desist from his endless labyrinth and fruitless love, the conclusion whereof since (for ought I did see) could be but repentance, the continuance would be but the redoubling of grief and to his former affliction the addition of a treble weight. His answer was that my too dear love unto him had procured in me more impatience than he could allow of. For so far was he from repentance, as that he preferred the acquaintance and least favour of so noble and worthy a Lady before the enjoying of the greatest Lady in the world. When I read this I could not but both laugh and sigh ; laugh to see what a creature love can make of a wise man ; and sigh to see that my best and most honored Lady had rejected this constant and more worthy man to make her husband than (I protest) I know living. Alas ! poor lover, alas ! neglected servant and woe unto all men that at their first entrance into love esteem women as Angels, but being overtaken with the wandering of their own affections do find them in the end no better

Courtship

better than merciless Tyrants. My Lady, I see, is not become like Pygmalion's Image, of a marble stone a fair woman, but of a fair woman is turned into a marble stone. I can do no more, I can say no more, but only this, that I am heavy, sad and weary ; weary of my life, weary of myself, and weary of whatsoever heretofore did most delight me, but most weary of all in thinking of my dearest and worthiest, unfortunate Lady whose wits are farthest from home, when they should be readiest to do her the best service.

I see by his writing to your daughter, and both writing and sending to me, and not to you, that his suit is grown desperate : and therefore remains no more of my part but after making confession and taking leave, to leave to follow these wan hopes any longer.

My confession then (good Madame) is this, that never since I first breathed air, either did I, or do I honor or love any woman above your worthy self. But in my love are, and ever shall be three sundry sorted ranks. The first is my natural affection to mine own generation : the second my passion of love to a woman, which is somewhat higher and hotter : the third the conjunction of my soul with the soul of another, which is the best and greatest, and this is and ever shall be peculiar to your cast-away, and to no other creature in the world. But

Courtship

yet if he had married my dear Lady, who hath the best part of my heart, but least part of my soul, then had my soul been twined with both yours to make up Solomon's three-folded cord, that is so hardly broken. But it must be as it may be, that can not be as I wish it. My conceit of this triple love, of affection, passion & conjunction I discovered unto you long ago in a letter wherein I writ (before you had ever seen my cousin) that there had been in my mind a duel betwixt love and honesty, yet honesty was and ever should be crowned with victory, and the hottest love of mine towards any woman when it came to fight with honesty, should have both his edge rebated and his point buttoned. So I said, and so I will say and think while I live, and am the better herein confirmed for that of late I have lit upon M^r Spenser's opinion so rightly agreeing with that which nature had taught me before, as the same might be thought to have been drawn out of his discipline. And because I know how much you delight in all good learning, and in such honest verses, and to add also some better tincture to my loth-to-depart, I will set them down as he writ them :

All naturall affection soon doth cesse
And quenched is with Cupides greater flame ;
But faithfull freindship doth them both suppress
And then with mayspring discipline doth tame
Through thoughtes aspiring to eternall fame.

Courtship

For as the soul doth rule the earthly masse
And all the service of the bodie frame :
So love of soul doth love of bodie passe
No less than perfect gold surmountes the meanest brasse.

And now (Madame) my soul I confess is his, so far as one man's soul may be another's, and followeth after him to comfort his poor distressed and unpitied soul : my heart is yours, my dead heart, wrapped up in sorrow, and buried in despair, yet good enough to offer for a present to her, whose heart is become "perseles" [pierceless]* and senseless as it hath lost understanding.

And seeing you have forsaken him, you shall with him also reject me, who am wholly his for ever. And first I will charm mine eyes, that hereafter they never see you : mine understanding I will so bewitch with strange illusions and fancies, as it shall ever apprehend you as a spirit or a spectre newly crept out of a grave, and then with frightening I will run from you as fast as my feet can bear me ; my ever dying heart I will cleave in pieces with continual fretting to see her an enemy to herself who unto me is so much endeared.

And

* Did your letters *pierce* the queen?
She read them in my presence,
And now & then an ample tear trill'd down.

SHAKESPEARE.

Courtship

And hereafter you shall not need to reprove my praises of you, nor to enquire the reasons wherefore I praise you, for when you are commended by others I will be silent, and bite my tongue between my teeth ; and will for ever hate all the virtues for your sake, that have made their cabin in the hard and senseless rock of your heart.

And so fare you well for ever my fair, dear and unfortunate Lady ; not more dear than fair, but much more unfortunate than either fair or dear : and farewell your pretty and worthy children with all good blessings from him that blesseth all : and farewell my good friends, your honest and kind houshold : farewell Arbury my own hoped heaven upon earth, my now tormenting hell, and farewell with thee whatsoever thou shroudest from wind and weather ; farewell my loth-to-depart and myself, for we two will go seek strange coasts together. And last of all farewell long letter, not too long because thou art my last : and when thou art gone from me shew to my dear Lady in what school thou wert brought up by these last words, which all their former fellows carried with them.

Your good Lady^{sp's} most infinitely bound
and ready to be commanded
for ever

FRANCIS BEAUMONT.





*Anne Pytton.
Lady Newdigate.*

To face Page 155

Courtship

In the postscripts that follow he becomes a little less lugubrious, and in the last of them he again refers to his "counsaylor," *i.e.*, Anne's sister Mary, who in the meanwhile has (apparently) married her second husband, John Lougher, or "Captain" Lougher, as Sir Peter Leycester calls him.

Francis Beaumont goes on :

I received this week a letter from my Lady Grey, wherein she writ unto me that she did hope that her suit for her sister should have good success, because in such matters I was very fortunate. Thus not only fair Phillida but Phillida's fair sister also doth flout me. And since I am flouted of all, fare you well all, for I am gone from you all for ever.

The last year I sent to my little Lady Emelie* a black cock and much black fortune followed ; this year I send her a white cock to see if change of colour will change fortune. I must entreat you when you see my counsellor to commend my heartiest love unto her and to tell her that though she be a married wife, yet I will take leave to love her for ever while I carry within me a heart that can love. If her husband will give me this liberty (which is in mine own power to take

* He probably means Lady Newdigate's eldest daughter, Mary, then about thirteen years old. The allusion is, no doubt, to the Lady Emilie, the heroine of the Knight's Tale in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," who was beloved by Palamon and Arcite.

Courtship

take myself) he shall love my wife (when I have her) as much as pleaseth him, and for his kindness I will love him far the better. Though I love not you, yet for your sake I love all your generation.

This long and piteous letter seems to have worked upon Lady Newdigate's feelings so far as to induce her to seek a personal interview with the writer at Bedworth. No sooner does she leave than he writes again what we take to be the last letter of the series :

My best lady

Presently after your departure from Bedworth, my cousin Saunders sent his footman unto me with a letter, the copy whereof I send you here enclosed. It is beyond the limitation of my commission to impart unto you his secret meaning unto me : but since every freeman hath a will, I will also as well as others sometimes use my freedom.

I perceive plainly this matter is grown to an end, and that my long work of subtraction hath been but a drawing of nothing out of nothing, after more than a whole year's well wishing unto you. If his most affectionate love towards you, and your kind love towards him, and my both kind and affectionate love towards you both must end but with a short black crotchet, as Orlando di Lasso closed up (it perisheth) when I have said but this (I am for ever sorry) then I have done. After many troubles that

Courtship

have chanced both to my cousin and me in prosecution of this desire our hope was, that God would in the end turn our mournings to mirth, unloose our sacks, and gird us with gladness, which had come to pass if this had happened, and that our hope of Cynthine's conjunction had not proved a wry aspect of a sextile.

What I could I have done and all that I have done proceeded of a most sincere love unto you both. Yet I must confess that in my labours I did not a little respect myself when I thought, by intercourse with two such excellent and worthy friends, that Arbury should have been my little heaven upon earth, where all my misfortunes, my melancholy passions, and heaps of grief should have found their present remedies. But like as Troilus once said, so I say :

All this I did, and I can do no more ;
She cruel is and woe is me therefore.

This is the last time that ever I will move you in this or any matter to like purpose, taking my leave of this suit as my cousin hath done of Warwickshire in his former letter unto me. Yet never will I forget that I have obtained the friendship of a most noble Lady, which I ever hope to hold though my cousin have missed the accomplishment of his desired love. And so wishing continually to possess the

Courtship

same by whatsoever service I can devise, I take my leave and rest

Your good Lady^{ps} most infinitely
bound and ready to be commanded

FRANCIS BEAUMONT.

My brother and sister, my niece, with all the best of this society salute you in more kind words than a sheet of paper can contain.

If it please you the sword may be sent by this bearer my cousin Saunders' boy.

The occasion of my cousin Saunders' letter unto me whereof I have sent you a Copy was this. Upon Monday his man coming to Bedworth with my Lady Grey's letter I sent him all that night with a letter of mine to his master to have had him to have met you at Bedworth upon Tuesday.

But you see his love is dying, not as virtuous souls depart in mildness, or as men leave this world after a consumption, but with such desperate pangs as are much more to be pitied by many degrees than I think they are. Of me I know they are pitied even with my soul's grief: of you I know not how, you know best for I know nothing that lieth hid in other hearts.

In this sad fashion exit "Cosyn Saunders" from the life-story of our heroines. We hear no more of him, but if our supposition be right, and he was Matthew
138 Saunders,

Courtship

Saunders, of Shankton, in Leicestershire, about this date he consoled himself by erecting an elaborate monument to the memory of his first wife, Margaret Skipwith, although her death took place in 1605, seven or eight years before his final dismissal as a wooer of Lady Newdigate. Neither has Anne preserved any later letters from Francis Beaumont. The latter may still have been a neighbour occasionally, although his brother and host, Sir Thomas Beaumont, died in 1612. It was five years later, in 1617, that Francis Beaumont was appointed (fourth) Master of the Charterhouse. He died in 1624, and is buried in the chapel. On his monument an effigy of him may be seen kneeling at his desk.

It may be interesting to students to know that he it was who, in 1597, addressed to "his very loving friend Mr Thomas Speght" a "judicious apology for the supposed levities of Chaucer," prefixed to the 1598 edition of Chaucer's works, and erroneously attributed to Francis Beaumont, the poet (then only thirteen years old).



CHAPTER VII

The Valley of Death



ONE of Anne Newdigate's chief friends was Elizabeth, daughter of Edward Nevill, Lord Abergavenny, and wife of Sir John Grey, eldest son of Lord Grey of Groby. In Francis Beaumont's letters she is frequently mentioned as a friend and near neighbour in Leicestershire. There are a number of letters from Lady Grey to her "Deerst Sister" Anne Newdigate in the muniment-room at Arbury, but are chiefly about her own concerns. She became a widow in October 1611, and then seems to have had some trouble with her father-in-law, Lord Grey of Groby, about money matters, her husband having died involved in debt.

The Valley of Death

Anne proved herself a sympathetic and useful ally in her friend's difficulties, and she has preserved the draft of a letter from herself to Lady Grey about this period which is so prettily expressed that it is given here as an example of her happier style :

My heart's all-honoring Lady, I did forbear to send these which misfortune cast into my custody till so fit an opportunity gave me cause to present them on to you. These are all that came to my hands but only one deed, which my weak opinion tells me is as well withheld, since as safe in my keeping as my love to your worthy self is assured. All the actions of my poor life's pilgrimage's performance (of use to you) is to solicit our merciful Redeemer, to whom I daily offer my sincere prayers, that he would be pleased to pour upon you as many blessed comforts as in his rich goodness he vouchsafeth to bestow upon his best beloved. With the presentation of my service to your dear self do humbly take my leave, And must cease to live before I can cease to be

faithfully yours

A. N.

Lady Grey's answer is as follows :

Dear Sister, I have received by My worthy friend Mr Saunders, all those things which your love hath so carefully kept for me : for the deed you have done me a great favor to retain it, for it would be dan-

The Valley of Death

gerous for me to have it till businesses are better settled between my lord and my friends for the good of my children. I only desire a copy of it by the first opportunity, that I may shew it counsel to know of what strength it will be to tie my Lord Grey : my eyes will not give me leave to say more of this or of any other business, so I leave it to this worthy bearer, that shall truly make you know the state of all my business : and for all those infinite favors which every hour your love gives me, the best satisfaction must be my affection with infinite wishes for your happiness which I can never express by my hand or any other way : except your faith were as your most affectionate sister sends them

E. GRAYE.

I send my most dearest love to my sweet goddaughter with many good wishes for her happy fortune and the like to the rest of your sweet children.

Lady Grey's affection for her friend prompted her to write warmly in favour of an aspirant to Anne's hand about this same date. No names are mentioned, but it seems likely that the trusted "bearer" in the last letter is the "worthy friend" for whom she pleads :

My dearest sister, If I had thought your lines would have brought me this hopeless news of my worthy friends affection I would have left to have challenged you for the necklet, and have desired your lines of
another

The Valley of Death

another subject, for I must confess you have handled this so excellently as I know not how to frame any answer to challenge anything you say, for I am in that state you are in but much more unfortunate, and I could infinitely commend your resolution if it were any other that offered affection : but when I remember whom it is and what happiness his worthiness promises, I must needs tell you that your too infinite care may take away that happiness which might give much content both to you and yours. God knows you are most dear to me, and so are your sweet children in my best wishes, and if any thought did tell my heart this match should be the least wrong to you or yours—if it were for my brother—my hand should never be so false to my heart as to solicit you by my lines to tie you to the least discontent : but it is needless for me to plead for him that can with the life of true affection plead for himself, and to him I leave it with my dearest wishes all may be as happy to you as to my life which is devoted to be everlastingly

Your affectionate sister

E. GRAYE.

In spite of so many advocates for a second marriage, we are glad to record that Anne continued to “live maister of herself,” and remained Anne Newdigate to the end.

The Valley of Death

Lady Grey married again in 1614. Her second husband was a Mr. Bingley, afterwards Sir John Bingley. Her eldest son by Sir John Grey was created Earl of Stamford in 1628.

In the year 1614, Anne's old friend, Sir William Knollys, now Lord Knollys, was appointed Master of the Wards, and she had occasion to appeal to his jurisdiction in regard to pending suits concerning her son's property. Doubtless Anne thought (and rightly as it turned out) that in memory of past times the new Master of the Wards would give every attention to petitions emanating from his former "Gossepp."

Anne's copies of her petitions still exist in two well-thumbed papers in her own handwriting. They are quaintly worded, and are evidently her own composition :

Right hon^{ble} [she writes] having ever been most bound to your Lord^{sp} though never meriting anything, do presume of the continuance of your Lord^{sp}'s favor to me & my Son, being the King's Ward, now under your honor's jurisdiction, knowing your noble disposition to all & myself heretofore liberally tasting thereof, am thereby encouraged in this bold manner to be my Son's solicitor to your Lord^{sp} : himself being young, not able to be his own intercessor, Though I hope & shall think myself most happy if in time he may attain to that perfection

The Valley of Death

tion to be held worthy to do your Lord^{sp} any service. It hath pleased God since M^r Newd.'s death (all noble Lord) that sundry suits & troubles have befallen me in respect of my Son's estate here ; being amongst a people of strange dispositions, which I thank God by this gentleman M^r Chamb:'s [Chamberlain*] means have well over passed, who is my near Neighbour and most willing to do me all friendly offices in my rightful causes. . . .

She then enters into particulars of her special grievances, complaining :

that it hath enforced me to call them in to the Court of Wards and to have suits (being a Woman and unfit for these affairs) upon process sent out of the Court of Wards. 3 Terms since [they] have not appeared, all to procure me more trouble & charge which is ever incident to poor unfortunate women in my case. . . . But since it hath pleased God to place your Lord^{sp} to be my Son's judge, I must confess I shall with much better comfort seek to defend his right, although it hath ever been my resolution since it pleased God of his great mercy to bestow the wardship of my Child upon me, what in the
power

* Probably the owner of Astley Castle of that name, and consequently a near neighbour, Astley Castle being only a mile and a half from Arbury.

The Valley of Death

power of my poor endeavours lieth whereby to settle his estate quietly, or keep it as I found it that I may be blameless etc. etc.

This petition evidently met with a favourable response from Lord Knollys. A year later Lady Newdigate frames another letter begging him to enforce the payment of the costs he had decreed should be paid her in this suit, which we hope was also successful.

Anne had other cares for her children at this time. She had not overlooked their future marriages, even when they were still in childhood. On more than one occasion she had some correspondence with friends as to an advantageous alliance for her boy. When he was only fourteen years old, she induced a friend, one Robert Phillips, to take a journey into Lincolnshire to make inquiries about a damsel but eleven years of age. Her name is not mentioned, but from the care with which she seems to have been guarded from the eyes of strangers, she must have been of special value as a matrimonial prize. "Pore Robin," as Mr. Phillips calls himself, seems to have fared somewhat badly on this quest :

Good Madam [he writes] my long and unmannerly stay in your Ladyship's house at my last being here, is the cause that pen and paper now present the tenor of my embassage into Lincolnshire rather than my person. I have effected what you required, found

The Valley of Death

the gentlewoman to be eleven years old and no more, neither yet fully that—no speech of marriage either to your nephew or any other in these parts. She is brought up in her father's house and a pretty gentlewoman as report goes. I saw her not, but of this I am assured, I might with much more ease have seen all the monuments at Westminster, the lions in the tower, jackanapes and all the bears in parish garden.* Poor Robin was plunged in a cage so deep that he had rather dive into four and twenty such cages as once he was in than run into it again. And yet thank God I am here ; but whilst I live I'll never run more there. God bless me from such holes. I have a great business for Thomas Beaumont which I must needs effect before I see Arbury. I lay at his father in law's at Lincoln from the 10th day till Shrove Tuesday, and from that time at Coleorton till the Monday after Palm Sunday, and God willing, I will be with him again on Wednesday at night, and there will lie the most part of this summer and so soon (as possibly I can) I will attend your ladyship's service (till when) I am ever commending

* Publius, student at the Common Law

Oft leaves his books, and for his recreation
To Paris Garden doth himself withdraw
Where he is ravished with such delectation
As down among the bears and dogs he goes.

SIR JOHN DAVIES.

The Valley of Death

mending your ladyship and all your pretty chickens to heaven's protection; not omitting my pretty Meg with her two sharp teeth and all the rest in general: Sent from Aldridge this present St George his day, and remain your Ladyship's ever whilst he is his own to command

ROBERT PHILLIPS.

When I am married forsooth, then I am at my wife's commands.

But Anne was not destined to live to see her beloved Jack prosperously married, nor even to be released from her anxious wardship.

In the autumn of 1617 she writes to her faithful servant, William Henshawe, who was doing business for her in London, addressing the letter as follows:

To my good servant M^r Willi: Henshawe at the Signe of the Crowne neare St Martin's Gate give these.

Good Willi:

M^r Holbeach cannot pass without two or three words, he can tell you of our health, all well I thank God, but my leg. I pray for your business and soon return. If M^r Thomson be at Whitehall go see him & M^r Leveson from me with thanks for all courtesies. I pray you enquire what becomes of Ned Lume my old servant, for I fear John will not be sufficient for the place. At my cousin George Crooke's you may hear of him, for he serves my Cousin Boulstred's

The Valley of Death

eldest brother. M^r Holbeach is in great haste, you may imagine so by my scribbling. With all our remembrances to your good self do leave you to God, being ever

Your old Mistress assured

A. NEWDIGATE.

Arbery, Oct. 27, 1617.

A month later she writes again :

Good Willi :

You have spent a great time in Attendance & never the better, only I can not but believe their slowness shews the poorness of their title. I desire peace if it may be, & so I pray you tell M^r Reed, & commend my love to him & M^r Verney ; but if it can not be to Jack, it shall not be to me.

I was so ill upon Thursday that I could not write to you, & am not much better at this time, my leg much troubling me, although little pain. It is to no purpose to trouble M^r Matthias about it, Unless he saw the manner of it, for I dare apply nothing unless I had his presence. M^r Mountfort is very careful, but knows not what to make of it. God's holy will be done. . . . Excuse me to all my friends that at this time I write not to, for I can ill endure to sit long. Also my eyes are not well able to endure to write. . . .

Am now offered a match for one of my Daughters, one M^r Kireton. I bade your uncle write to you to

enquire

The Valley of Death

enquire of Mr Willi : Wright, but Jack must lead the way. I sent you a note of spice & other things. I fear your purse will scarce hold out. If not, I must supply it ; but I think new fruits will not come in till very near Christmas, & I need not any thing that I have sent for, but a little before the time. I think Bosworth, the carrier of Nuneaton goeth one journey more before Christmas. You may enquire of him being now in London, he carries for three farthings the pound which is cheaper than any other. I pray you get Ralph Hayward to buy for me two such lanterns as he bought for me to stick on a wall. Commend me to your sister & tell her that the lace I gave her for Jack's ruff was but 15 yards ; if it be not enough as I think it is not, let me know what wanteth & I will send it, for there was 3 yards left behind.

Anne then sends excuses to various friends for not answering their letters :

It is my unaptness that hinders. I hope you will not be long from home, God send us a comfortable meeting, all my dear children are well I humbly thank God & commend their loves to you. . . . I pray you commend me to Mistress Gresley & thank her for her care ; entreat that her Lady may not know of the sapphire by any means, I would have just such A one as that was her Lady gave me or else none : I

The Valley of Death

will cease your trouble and my own & leave you to
God's blessed keeping being ever

Yo^r Mistress & freind ever assured

A. NEWDIGATE.

I have writ to Sir Francis Englefield to enquire out
a match for Jack : put him in mind thereof &
entreat my servant Bossone to do as much.

Excuse me to my cousin Ned Fitton. I was about
to write to him & M^r Chamb : came & staid as long
as he could see. By my cousin Boustred's [Bulstrode's]
horses upon Thursday I will write if please God. If
you can learn the time of any of my friends purpose
of being here before you come, I pray you send
word.

My clock I fear is quite spoiled : it gets 2 hours in
12 & will strike but one in every hour.

There is one more letter written to W. Henshawe four
days later, in which Anne takes advantage of "my
cousin Boustred's horses going" to send answers to
those "good friends" to whom she could not write
before.

The term's end [she writes] I hope will send you to
us ; but if we agree not of peace I pray you know of
my Cousin Croke whether in the vacation they can
not put A trick upon us, in respect it is under A
colour for the king. Dale gives great words ; so
doth Anthony Robinson, but I respect them as I do
the

The Valley of Death

the speakers. We are all well I humbly thank God. Only myself & that the least matter ; my leg I know not what to say of it or do to it, but God's blessed will be done. I pray you let Mr. Mathias know that I have drunk scurvy-grass* this 6 weeks both morning & afternoon & purpose so to do still. I have no more to trouble you withal but to deliver the lace & ribbon to your sister. Jack commends him unto you & bids you tell Willi : Butterson that the lamp had 3 holes in it. A tinker was fain to mend it. He must furnish him with some oil for it. We had [some] from Coventry & it is so vile that it smells all the house over. Farewell good Willi : commend my love to all my good friends, wishing you a happy journey & good return, do commit you to God remaining ever

Your Mistress & assured
friend

Nov^r the 26th

A. NEWDIGATE.

1617.

Commend me to Sir Walter Leveson & tell him I hope he will see Arbury in his return. I hear Sir George Curzon went to London this week ; if he did I pray you tell him that I take it very unkindly that he would not see me ; I hope he believes that I would have been most glad to have seen him at
Arbury

* The spoonwort : a plant.—(Johnson.)

The Valley of Death

Arbury if he do not he doth me the more wrong, tell his Lady Daughter so.

These three letters must have been preserved as amongst the last Anne wrote, for early in the following summer (to use her own words) God called her. In the prime of life, being only forty-three years of age, she was taken away, leaving five children to lament the loss of a mother at a critical period of their young lives, the eldest being just twenty and the youngest only eleven years old. Thus she never lived to see her anxious wardship brought to an end ; the active brain ceased to work and the loving heart to beat on behalf of the children for whom alone she seemed to live.

In accordance with the directions in her will, she was taken to Harefield to be buried. If she had died at Gawsworth, her desire was to have been laid at rest in the home of her youth ; but as she passed away at Arbury, her remains now lie beside her husband in the old family burial-place of Harefield. There they rest within the walls of that quaint and picturesque old church, which stands in solitary beauty in an oasis of green meadow land, whilst behind it rises a noble background of fine old trees.

Anne's effigy on the sculptured monument to her husband's memory erected in her lifetime is not a flattering representation of her, and bears little resemblance to her portraits at Arbury, of which there are four.

The Valley of Death

The latest of these must have been executed about four years before her death. It is a full-length portrait, where she is depicted standing by a table with a fan in her hand. In spite of her large hoop, she looks slight in figure, and her countenance is pale and wan. Her gown is of black velvet with a ruff closed at the throat, and the red embroidery of her high-heeled shoes gives the only touch of colour to her dress.

Anne Newdigate's will, a copy of which, entirely in her own handwriting, is at Arbury, is dated in 1610, the year of her widowhood. Much of the first part is copied from her husband's will, to which she was left sole executrix.

She begins, as was customary at that time, with a profession of her faith :

In the name of the father and of the son and of the holy ghost Amen.

I dame Anne Newdigate, late wife of Sir John Newdigate, Knight, being in health of body and in perfect and good memory thanks be to my merciful God for the same, at the making of this my last Will and Testament which I ordain etc. etc.

First I bequeath my soul into the hand of God my maker & creator and to Jesus Christ my blessed Saviour and Redeemer, and to the Holy Ghost my blessed sanctifier. . . .

And I bequeath my body to the earth from whence it
came,

The Valley of Death

came, desiring either to be buried in Harefield church by my husband, Sir John Newdigate or in Gawsworth Church by my dear father Sir Edward Fitton without any extraordinary cost, but in a comely manner as is fit, with some small memory of me, as my name, and my husband's and father's Arms together in some window set. I desire to be buried at Harefield, unless it should please God I shall die at Gawsworth since it is God's will that I should outlive my husband Sir John Newdigate, and he making me his executrix, leaving me in trust with his Children, and all that ever he had in the world, I hereby charge my Executors, as they answer before God at the general day of Judgement, that whatsoever shall be left unperformed of his my husband's Will at my death, that it be truly and faithfully performed.

Item, I give to my son John Newdigate all chattells, goods, plate, household stuff, stocks of cattle, quick or dead, that I shall have at the time of my death remaining unbequeathed, my Will being first performed, the remainder to my son John :

Lady Newdigate then wills certain portions to her daughters and to her second son, who inherits some land as well, and continues :

And whereas out of my dear love to my eldest son, and for the better upbuilding of his house, I have

The Valley of Death

hereby wholly given and disposed the profit of his wardship and marriage to those uses the sooner to free his lands in Middlesex etc. . . . yet he shall pay each of his sisters Thirty pounds apiece yearly until they are married or their portions are paid to them. . . . And I earnestly desire and charge William Whitall as he was left in trust by his Master, my husband Sir John Newdigate and now by me that my boys may be brought up in good learning and both they and my daughters to be bred up in virtuous and godly life in our Catholick and Protestant Religion, to the understanding of God's holy Will and ways revealed in his great compassion and mercy unto us by his divine Gospel, and in the true faith of Jesus Christ our only Saviour, Redeemer and Mediator, whom I beseech in his abundant mercy make them all five of his chosen elect. And when my boys are of fitting learning and years that they may go to the Universities and Inns of Court. And I charge William Whitall that my eldest son be not married before he be Sixteen years old at the least, and not then nor ever against his own Will and good liking by any interest challenged over him by my right. . . .

Anne then divides her "gownes, petticoats, jewells" and other valuables among her five children. She bequeaths to Richard the bedstead "with the yellow velvet
156 canopy

The Valley of Death

canopy and taffeta quilt which my uncle Francis Fitton gave me."

To her daughter "Marie" she leaves "my Lady Graye's picture," and to Lettice "my tablet with my sister picture in it."

Item I give unto my dear Mother the Lady Fitton my scollop shell Ring with the diamond in, which my father gave me.

Item, my will and desire is to have a few plain gold Rings made of ten or twelve shillings price with a pansy being my father's Crest, engraven on the outside and two letters for my name enamelled with black on either side the pansy and an inscription within to be in latin, these words following: *Death is the begiñinge of life*; and to be delivered unto so many of my friends as a memory of my love as I here nominate.

Amongst those here mentioned is Anne's sister, Mary Polewhele, the date of this portion of her will being shortly after William Polewhele's death and before the Lougher marriage.

The last part was added in 1615, when she goes on :

I now make and ordain my honorable kinsman Sir Francis Englefield Knight Baronet, William Whitall and William Henshawe my two servants, my three

Executors

The Valley of Death

Executors. I did [not] nominate Sir Francis till I had spoken with him, who hath promised me to take care of my Children. . . .

In witness that this is my Will and Deed I set my hand the four and twentieth of October in the year of Our Lord 1615.

ANNE NEWDIGATE.

We know no more of the last days of Anne, Lady Newdigate. Her mother and her sister may have been with her at the end, for they both survived her by many years.

On one side of the elaborate monument erected to the memory of Sir Edward Fitton, in Gawsworth Church, is the seated figure of his widow Alice, Lady Fitton, her head resting on her hand. Behind her appear her two daughters, Anne and Mary, kneeling, whilst her two sons are in a like attitude in front.

Of Mary Lougher we can ascertain only that she was again left a widow in 1636, when she took out letters of administration to her second husband's estate. We are indebted to Mr. Bridgeman for this information and also for the discovery of her will. Had it not been for his unwearied and persistent efforts, we should be without the glimmer of light afforded us by these wills of Polewhele and Mary, and the administration to Lougher. We desire again to record our gratitude to him for the time and pains he has expended in procuring

158 valuable

The Valley of Death

valuable information, and also for his useful criticism of the manuscript of this work.

Mary Lougher's will is dated December 19, 1640, and was proved in the Prerogative Court of the Archbishop of Canterbury on July 5, 1647 : it was proved a second time, before the Probate Court established by Cromwell, on September 22, 1653. The executors appointed by the will were her son, William Polewhele, and her daughter Elizabeth Lougher, but probate was granted to William Polewhele alone, as "surviving executor."

She bequeaths the lease of Perton to her son William Polewhele ; the lease of Rinkeston or Rinteston and Kilkelly, in Pembrokeshire, to her daughter Elizabeth Lougher. She makes bequests to her "little grand-child Ann Gattachree" to her son-in-law John Gattachree, his wife and three children. She mentions her son-in-law, Robert Chernnock, and gives directions for her burial at Goulsworth [Gawsworth], co. Chester.

Thus she apparently continued to flourish like a green bay-tree until 1647, the date of her death, when she must have been sixty-nine years old.

In bidding farewell to Mary Fitton, with all the difficulties that obscure her career, we cannot but hope and believe that the brilliant maid of honour, frail though she undoubtedly was, had qualities of heart and soul to enable her to benefit by the love and example of her faithful sister. And as Anne was charitable to her failings to the last, so may we also be.

The Valley of Death

It may be interesting here to jot down as briefly as possible the main facts in the after lives of Anne's five children.

Her eldest son, the much-loved Jack, married early Susanna, daughter of Arnold Luls, a Dutch merchant in London. They had one son, who died in infancy, and when about his mother's age, John died himself in the year 1642.

The property then passed to his only brother, Richard, a lawyer of great ability and independent honesty of character. He is known to history in Cromwell's time for having refused to condemn the Earls of Bellasis and Dumfries, with Colonel Halsey and other Royalists, who were tried before him at the York Assizes for levying war against the Protector. Judge Newdigate observed that "although by 25 Ed. III. it was high treason to levy war against the king, he knew of no statute to extend this to a Lord Protector." In consequence of this independence of action he was deprived of his place, but later restored to the Bench at a date which is not accurately known, but must have been prior to the Michaelmas Term of 1657. He was advanced to the Presidency of the Upper Bench in 1660, and later on he was made a baronet by Charles II. He married Julian, daughter of Sir Francis Leigh, of Newnham Regis, and had a large family, from one of whom the present family are directly descended, although the male line with the baronetcy became extinct at the beginning of this century.

The Valley of Death

Of Anne Newdigate's daughters, the eldest, Mary, nicknamed "Waspsnest" by Sir Richard Leveson, married Edmund Bolton, of Granborough, co. Warwick, but none of her descendants survive, the last of them, a daughter Lettice, having died unmarried in 1693-4. Lettice Bolton was buried in Astley Church, where it is recorded on her monument that she "lived very handsomely upon a narrow fortune ; her life was without trouble, and her death without pain."

Anne's second daughter, Lettice Newdigate, died unmarried at the age of twenty.

Anne, the youngest of the family, who was only eleven years old at the time of her mother's death, married Sir Richard Skeffington, Kt., second son of Sir William Skeffington, Bart., of Fisherwick, co. Stafford, and their son, who married the daughter of Sir John Clotworthy, 1st Viscount Massarene, succeeded to that peerage under the special remainder of the patent on the death of his father-in-law. Lady Skeffington died when only twenty-nine, and an admiring friend (possibly the "Cousin Boustred" of Lady Newdigate's letters) has perpetuated her memory in a monument erected by him in St. Michael's Church, Coventry.

The inscription is as follows :

An Elegicall epitaph made upon the death of that
mirror of women Ann Newdigate, Lady Skeffington,
wife of that true moaneing turtle Sir Richard
Skeffington,

The Valley of Death

Skeffington, K^t, & consecrated to her eternal
memorie by the unfeigned lover of her vertues,
Will^m Bulstrode Knight.

Vertue humble, beautie chaste, pious wit,
Husband's honour, women's glorye, sweetlye knit,
And all comprised fairelye in this one,
Sad fate hath here enshrined with this stone.
Vertue triumph, for thou hast woon the prize ;
Beautie teach women to be chast & wise ;
Make her your patterne of a vertuous life
Who lived & died a faire unspotted wife.
She was the mirror of her age and dayes
And now the subject of transcendent prayse.
O what a harmonye man's life would be,
Were women all but neare as good as she.

.

Obiit Maïi 21 ætatis suæ 29, anno Dni 1637.

Our self-imposed task is at an end. Farewell Anne, Dame Newdigate, true daughter, sister, wife and mother. We trust we have done you justice. It has not been for lack of admiration if we have failed. For us, living as we do within the same walls where, three hundred years ago, Anne lived, loved and died, where her portraits look down upon us from dining-hall and gallery, our chief heroine's personality has a reality and a fascination which we cannot hope to impart to our readers.

We would, however, hope that Anne's true womanly
162 life

The Valley of Death

life may still have an influence for good on the posterity she longed to benefit. May we one and all so learn the true lesson of this life's pilgrimage as to be able to echo from our hearts the last message to her friends of the first Lady Newdigate of Arbury :

“Death is the begininge of life.”





APPENDIX A

The Arbury Portraits of Mary Fitton, *by C. G. O. Bridgeman, Esq.*

SINCE the appearance of the first edition of this book the accuracy of the statement therein made, that the two portraits at Arbury, of which photogravures are given in the frontispiece and on p. 27, represent, the one Anne and Mary Fitton, and the other Mary Fitton, has been publicly challenged both by Mr. Tyler in the columns of the *Standard* of 27th October 1897 and by Dr. Furnivall in an article in the *Theatre* for December 1897. It seems, therefore, desirable that in any new edition of this work the evidence on the subject should be stated, in order that those interested in the question may be in a position to judge for themselves, although the substance of what follows has already been published in a letter by the writer to the *Academy* of 9th January 1892 and in an abbreviated form in a letter to the *Standard* of 1st December 1897.

The collection of portraits at Arbury derives its chief interest from its obviously genuine nature, many of the older ones being still in their original frames. Most of them, however,

Appendix A

bear comparatively modern inscriptions, all in the same style, stating the name and in many cases also the dates of birth and death of the subject of the portrait. These modern inscriptions may safely be attributed to the latter half of the eighteenth century, during the time of Sir Roger Newdigate, the last Baronet, who was born in 1719, succeeded in 1734, and died in 1806, and on whose portrait as a boy, although the date of his birth is given, that of his death (unlike the case of portraits of his brothers taken about the same time) is omitted: it is probable that they were added in 1768, when many of the pictures were cleaned and revarnished, and though there are reasons for supposing that these inscriptions were inserted under Sir Roger's own personal supervision, several of them are very inaccurate, and where they are not supported by independent evidence it would be unsafe to rely upon them. But, besides these eighteenth-century inscriptions, there are on several of the older pictures Latin words and figures, giving the age of the subject of the portrait, and usually also the year in which it was painted; and there seems no reason to doubt that these Latin inscriptions are, as they obviously profess to be, contemporaneous, and therefore entitled to credit. Details such as these could hardly have been added innocently by a later generation; if not contemporaneous, they must be a deliberate attempt to mislead; and, even if so improbable an hypothesis could be entertained, it is difficult to believe that with this object in view any one would adopt so subtle a device as to give the date and age without any further clue to the name of the person depicted.

The first of the pictures under discussion—viz., that represented in the photogravure on the frontispiece to this book—is on panel. It contains the portraits of two girls in Elizabethan dress and large circular ruffs, both nearly full face but turned slightly to the (spectator's) left. The elder girl, the one on

166 the

Appendix A

the left, has dark grey eyes with arched eyebrows ; she wears one or two rings on the third finger of her right hand, and holds in her right hand a fan and in her left a flower, which seems to be a carnation ; on her ruff is painted a pansy ; on her forehead, and suspended from her headdress, she wears a jewel, either a ruby or a garnet, surrounded by several large pearls, with pearl pendant ; in her ears, of which the left only is visible, are pearl earrings, and round her neck is a necklace composed of pearls and rubies or garnets. Her bodice and sleeves are black, with embroidered front and skirt of a lighter colour. Strings of pearls hang from her shoulders down to her waist. The younger girl, on the right, has dark blue-grey eyes and brown hair of a distinctly lighter shade than the other, complexion fairer and eyebrows less strongly marked, high cheek-bones, full lower lip and short chin ; she wears a ring on the little finger of her left hand, in which she holds a pansy, a bit of honeysuckle, and some other flowers, which seem to be meant for rosebuds ; a large pearl suspended from her headdress hangs over a curl of hair in the middle of her forehead ; on her ruff is depicted a carnation, on her right sleeve a holly leaf, and on her left a sprig of some plant resembling a palm branch. She is dressed in a white bodice and skirt, faintly marked with a sort of pattern ; she wears a necklace of dark blue enamel and pearls, and in her left ear is seen an earring composed of two cherries. This picture bears no eighteenth-century inscription, but at the top, in the middle, are the words "*Anno dom 1592*," in the left corner "*Etatis sue 18*," and in the right "*Etatis sue 15*."

Although no names are inscribed on this picture, it bears several internal indications by which the subjects of the portraits can be identified with reasonable, if not with absolute, certainty. Anne Fitton was baptized at Gawsworth 6th October 1574, Mary Fitton 24th June 1578, so that, if the

Appendix A

picture was painted between the months of June and October 1592, their ages would exactly correspond with those given on the picture, one being then in her eighteenth, the other in her fifteenth year. Again, on the ruff of the elder girl and in the hand of the younger is painted a pansy, whilst on the ruff of the younger and in the hand of the elder is depicted a carnation. The pansy is a device frequently occurring in pictures connected with the Fitton family: it forms part of the Fitton crest, as shown above the shield of arms over the doorway at the Old Hall at Gawsworth, Sir Edward Fitton's place in Cheshire, and on the old oak chimneypiece in the gallery at Arbury (on a cap of maintenance *az.* turned up *erm.* a pansy erect *ppr.* stalked *vert*); it is alluded to in one of Francis Beaumont's letters as emblematic of Lady Newdigate's family, and it is referred to by Lady Newdigate herself in her will,* where she bequeaths to her friends memorial-rings to be "engraved on the outside with a pansy which is my father's crest." It would seem as if the carnation also had some special significance as connected with the family, for in another undoubted portrait of Lady Newdigate at Arbury, with her infant child, she holds in her hand a carnation, the only flower to be seen in the picture. Then again the jewel on the forehead of the elder girl is the same as that painted on the breast of the child in the picture last referred to, and it seems to be the one described in Lady Newdigate's will* as "My fewe greate rounde pearle with the jewell and three pearle hanginge at it"; while the necklace worn by the elder girl in the double portrait is the same as that worn by Lady Newdigate's daughter Lettice in another picture at Arbury. All these indications
taken

* Prerogative Court, Canterbury, 106 Parker.

Appendix A

taken together, and in conjunction with the striking likeness between the elder girl in the double picture and other undoubted portraits of Lady Newdigate, lead irresistibly to the conclusion that they represent one and the same person, and so far I believe the identification of the picture has not been challenged.

As regards the younger girl, the strong *a priori* probability that two young girls painted on the same panel are sisters is sufficiently obvious, and this *a priori* probability is confirmed by certain characteristic resemblances between the faces of the two girls, by the exact correspondence of the age of the younger girl as recorded on the picture with that of Mary Fitton in 1592, and by the occurrence of the pansy and the carnation in her hand and on her ruff. That Lady Newdigate did possess a portrait of her sister is attested by her will, where she bequeaths "my tablet* with my sister picture in it" to her daughter Lettice, a description which might well apply to the picture now under discussion, though it is of course impossible to say positively that it is the one referred to. Moreover, as Lettice Newdigate died under twenty-one, and her brother Richard (afterwards first Baronet) took out letters of administration to her estate, any picture belonging to her would in the natural course of events be still at Arbury.

Mr.

* The word "table" was in common use in England in the sixteenth century in describing a picture painted on panel as distinguished from one painted on canvas (*Notes and Queries*, 7th series, i. 135). It is so used in the Inventory of King Henry VIII.'s pictures at Westminster Palace in 1542 (*cf.* Horace Walpole's "Anecdotes of Painting in England," 8vo ed. 1849, vol. i. p. 63). The word "tablet" was also used with a similar signification ("Century Dictionary," *sub nom.*).

Appendix A

Mr. Tyler has attempted to identify the younger girl in this picture, as well as the two other portraits hereinafter referred to, with Mildred Cooke, who married Sir Henry Maxey, Kt., of Bradwell, co. Essex, and in support of this theory he relies upon the devices on the sleeves, which I have called a holly leaf and a sprig of some plant resembling a palm branch, and contends that they represent the armorial bearings of Cooke (namely, *or* a chevron company *gu.* and *az.* between three cinquefoils of the second) and Belknap (*az.* three eagles with wings displayed in bend between two cottises *arg.*)* With the photogravure in the frontispiece before them those interested in the question will be able to judge of the probability of this contention: to me I confess it appears to be the height of extravagance. At any rate, it is a fact beyond dispute that Mildred Cooke (Lady Maxey) was baptized at Romford in September 1573, so that in 1592 she would have been in her nineteenth, not her fifteenth year; that is, a year older instead of three years younger than Anne Fitton, Lady Newdigate; and this awkward fact for his theory Mr. Tyler has been obliged to meet in the only way open to him, namely, by saying that the professedly contemporaneous dates on this picture are discredited by the inaccuracy of some of the eighteenth-century inscriptions on other pictures; surely a remarkable argument, but not very convincing. I may observe in passing that I can find no evidence that Lady Newdigate was even acquainted with Mildred Cooke till after 1596, about which year the former came to live at Arbury, where she would be within a drive of Hartshill, near Atherstone, then the residence of Mildred's father, William Cooke, second son of Sir Anthony Cooke, of Gidea Hall or Giddyhall, co. Essex.

Some

* See a letter by Mr. Tyler in the *Academy* of 16th Jan. 1892.

Appendix A

Some years later—viz., in 1604—Lady Maxey in two letters to Lady Newdigate alludes to a “pecter” of herself which she had left for her friend at the lodgings of her “brother Cooke,” and she apologises for its having been drawn on “a borde” instead of on “a canfis.” Whether this picture still exists or not it is impossible to say.

Besides the double portrait, two other pictures at Arbury have been ascribed to or mentioned in connection with Mary Fitton, one of which has been reproduced in the photogravure on p. 27 of this book. This picture (which I will call No. 2) is on canvas: it is a three-quarter length portrait of a lady with blue-grey eyes and dark-brown hair, high cheek-bones, full lower lip and short chin, pearl earrings and necklace, a large ruff open in front, dress of a salmon colour with white front and sleeves and ornamented with caterpillars and moths, a locket or badge attached to a narrow ribbon and fastened on her bosom, a double string of onyxes and pearls hanging from her shoulders, no rings. At the top of this picture is an eighteenth-century inscription, “Lady Macclesfield, 3rd daughter of Sir Edw^d Fitton, Dame of Honour to Q^a Elizabeth.

The other, which has not been reproduced in photogravure (I will call it No. 3), is a three-quarter length portrait on panel of a lady of the time of Queen Elizabeth, with grey eyes and brown hair, but the eyes have larger pupils, and the colour of the hair is a brighter brown than in picture No. 2; the eyebrows are more arched, complexion more florid, nose shorter, and upper lip and chin longer, with a marked dimple in her cheek. She wears a large ruff, white bodice ornamented with a sort of scale pattern, and skirt of very dark green and white brocade. On her left sleeve is fastened a brooch of coral and some dark stone with pearl pendants, and a long ornamental chain hangs round her neck and down to her waist,

Appendix A

waist, where it passes round the thumb of her left hand. In the right top corner is the eighteenth-century inscription, "Countess of Stamford, 2nd daughter of Sir Edw^d Fitton, K^t."

The inscriptions on these two pictures are clearly inaccurate, for no such persons ever existed, but it is not difficult to see how the mistake arose. The Sir Edward Fitton of this date had only two daughters, Anne and Mary, the latter being Queen Elizabeth's attractive but frail Maid of Honour. But his son, Sir Edward Fitton, who was made a Baronet by King James I. in 1617, had a daughter Penelope, who married Sir Charles Gerard, Kt., of Halsall, and their son was created Earl of Macclesfield in 1679. Among the correspondents of Anne Lady Newdigate were Mildred Lady Maxey (*née* Cooke) and Elizabeth Lady Grey (*née* Nevill), whose son was created Earl of Stamford in 1628. Both these ladies appear to have been on terms of intimacy with Lady Newdigate and address her as "sister." The author or the eighteenth-century inscriptions, presumably Sir Roger Newdigate, seems to have been misled by the use of this term, and to have thought that Mary Fitton, the Maid of Honour, was the same person as the mother of Lord Macclesfield,* and that she was also the writer of the letters signed "M. Maxey," which he supposed (as is shown

* Sir Roger Newdigate was not the first person who made this confusion between the two generations of Fittons, as is shown by the following note in the handwriting of his grandfather, the second Sir Richard Newdigate, in 1686: "Penelope Gerard to be niece not sister to Anne Fitton who married John Newdegate. Edward Fitton baronet married Anna Barret & had issue Penelope who married Charles Gerard *Militi* father of Charles Earl of Macclesfield." Notwithstanding this correction, the mistake seems to have again occurred and been stereotyped by Sir Roger on the picture.

Appendix A

shown by an indorsement on one of the letters in Sir Roger's handwriting) to be a cant name for "Mary Macclesfield," and further, that the mother of the Earl of Stamford was another sister of Lady Newdigate.

As regards picture No. 2, there is not much evidence to identify the subject with Mary Fitton except the striking resemblance, especially about the mouth and chin, to the younger girl in the double portrait and the description of the picture in the earliest existing catalogue of pictures at Arbury, also belonging to the eighteenth century, where it is entered as "Daughter to S^r Ed^d Fitton, maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth and wife to the Earl of Macclesfield." As regards picture No. 3, there is absolutely no evidence to support the identification. The likeness (if any) to the other portraits is very superficial, and the mouth and chin quite different. Whether it represents Mildred Lady Maxey, as Dr. Furnivall apparently assumes, or Elizabeth Lady Grey, the mother of Lord Stamford, as on the whole appears more likely, it is impossible to say. It is known that Lady Newdigate did possess a picture of the latter as well as one of the former, for she mentions "my Lady Graye's picture" in her will, and the eighteenth-century inscription, though inaccurate, rather points to this conclusion. In any case, Dr. Furnivall's complaint that the present Lady Newdegate has not treated the public quite fairly in not having given a photogravure of this third portrait also is surely an unreasonable one. It is difficult to see why, in a book which deals with passages in the lives of Anne and Mary Fitton, there should be introduced a portrait which neither the editress nor Dr. Furnivall himself nor any one else now believes to represent either of these ladies.

One other argument remains to be considered. It is said that the identification of any of the portraits at Arbury with

Mary

Appendix A

Mary Fitton is incompatible with the evidence afforded by the monument at Gawsworth, where in her kneeling effigy she is represented with black hair and dark complexion. I do not dispute the fact that, so far as any traces of colouring remain on the monument, Mary Fitton's hair and complexion appear to be distinctly darker than they are shown in the pictures. But in other respects, especially the high cheek-bones, full lips, and short chin, the marble effigy is quite in harmony with the Arbury pictures, and I would ask whether it is possible to rely with any confidence on the accuracy of the colouring upon a marble effigy which has been exposed to the dust and grime of centuries, especially where (as here) the hair of all the other figures, although not the moustache of her eldest brother, appears to be of the same black hue? I am anxious that all the evidence should be stated fairly, and I admit that the argument is entitled to some (though I think slight) weight, but when it is weighed against the evidence on the other side, to me at any rate it appears impossible to doubt to which side the balance inclines.

C. G. O. BRIDGEMAN.

11 STONE BUILDINGS, LINCOLN'S INN,
January 1898.



APPENDIX B

*Extracts from a list of Anne Newdigate's expenses,
showing that she was evidently a visitor to Mary
Polewhele in 1607, the date of this account.*

Item chickens 14.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	2	4
It: 6 chickens	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	1	2
It: clarett wine	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	2	0
It: a dozen & halfe of pigeons	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	2	3
It: for rosemarye flowers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	0	4
It: halfe an elle of lace for lettice	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	2	0
It: to M ^r Mathyas	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	10	0
It: broumes	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	0	4
It: to goodwife gardener for her halfe yeare's wages										
ending at 1607 ou ^r La: daye	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	15	0
It: 12 ducklings	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	2	6
It: aquavita	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	1	6
It: 5 couple of rabets	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	3	0
It: to Will: Walker the Joyner	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	0	9
										Item

Appendix B

Item tow pans more then the ould	.	.	.	0	5	1
It: Wooden ware for the dog's house	.	.	.	0	1	0
It: a pore man	.	.	.	0	0	4
It: a girdle for dicke	.	.	.	0	2	6
It: peirceing 50 pearls	.	.	.	0	1	6
It: makeing Mall's ringe	.	.	.	0	1	0
It: a paire of shoes for Jacke	.	.	.	0	1	0
It: virginall wiers	.	.	.	0	0	4
It: a paire of shoes for myself	.	.	.	0	2	6
It: a paire for lettice	.	.	.	0	1	0
It: the shoemaker's man	.	.	.	0	0	4
It: 12 elles of cloth weaving & tow dossen of napkins	.	.	.	0	1	0
It: nurse on her goeing	.	.	.	0	10	0
It: 12 yeards of cobbweb lawn	.	.	.	0	8	0
It: 6 threed laces	.	.	.	0	0	6

At my being at perton

It: the keeper at Brude parke	.	.	.	0	10	0
It: the keeper's men	.	.	.	0	2	0
It: in the house at perton	.	.	.	0	8	0
It: to my sister for silver chamlett	.	.	.	1	0	0
It: Docter Cherriboode	.	.	.	2	0	0
It: at S ^r Walter Leueson	.	.	.	0	4	6
It: mending the Coatch	.	.	.	0	2	6
It: my sister's nurse	.	.	.	0	2	0
etc. etc.						



INDEX

A

ANDERSON, Sir Edmund, 4, 5

Arbury, built on ruins of priory, 4 ; bought by John Newdegate, *ib.* ; portraits at, 165

Ashburnham, Elizabeth, Lady, 55, 100, 102, 107, 127 ; her letter to Anne, 128

B

BEAUMONT, Elizabeth (*see* Ashburnham)

Beaumont, Francis, birth and parentage, 99 ; letters to Anne from Bedworth, 100, 103-105, 120, 122, 130-138 ; from Bosworth, 114 ; from Stoughton, 112, 117, 124 ; advocates his cousin's suit, 120, 125, 130-138 ; mention of his oration to the king, 124 ; final leave-taking, 136-138 ; quotation from Spenser, 132 ; appointed to Charterhouse, 139 ; death and monument, *ib.* ; preface to Chaucer, *ib.*

Beaumont, Sir Thomas, parentage and marriage, 99 ; summons to the Court, 112 ; illness, 115 ; death, 139

Beaumont, Sir Thomas (the younger), 127, 147

177

M

Bedworth,

Index

Bedworth, 99, 116, 136, 138
Belgrave, Sir George, 125
Belknap, armorial bearings of, 170
Berkeley, Catherine, 126
Bingley, Sir John, 144
Bolton, Edmund, 161
Bolton, Lettice, parentage, 161 ; epitaph, *ib.*
Bolton, Mary (*see* Newdigate)
Bowdler, Samuel, 75
Brackley, Viscount (*see* Egerton, Sir Thomas)
Bradwell, 170
Bridgeman, Mr. C. G. O., 83, 88, 158, 165
Brooke, Lord, 72, 86, 87
Buckhurst, Lord, 63
Bulstrode, Sir William, 148, 151 ; epitaph to Lady Skeffington,
161
Burnell, Sir Hugh, 74

C

CAREW, Sir George, 42
Carey, Mrs., 39
Carleton, Dudley, 42
Carye, Henry, letter to Anne, 7
Cave, Sir Ambrose, 9 ; picks up Queen Elizabeth's garter, *ib.*
Cave, Anthony, father of Martha Newdigate, 4
Cave, Margaret, 48
Cave, Martha, co-heiress to Anthony Cave, 4, 48
Cecil, Sir Robert, 42, 44, 63 (*see also* Salisbury)
Chamberlain, Mr., 83, 84, 145, 151
Chandos, Lord, 9
Chernnock, Mr. Robert, 159
Clotworthy, Sir John, 161
Combe Abbey, 62
178

Cooke,

Index

Cooke, armorial bearings of, 170
Cooke, Mildred, Lady Maxey, 55, 169, 170, 172, 173
Cooke, Sir Anthony, 170
Cooke, William, *ib.*
Curzon, Sir George, 152

D

DARCY, Mrs., 39
Derby, Alice, Countess of, 5, 43
Derby, Earl of, 84
Devonshire, Earl of, 61
Dixie, Lady, 100, 114, 116
Dorset, Earl of, 63

E

EGERTON, Sir John, 5, 83
Egerton, Sir Thomas, Lord Keeper, 5 ; buys Harefield, *ib.* ; second marriage to Lady Derby, 5, 43 ; shut up by Essex, 31 ; created Baron Ellesmere and Viscount Brackley, 63
Elizabeth, Queen, anecdote of her garter, 9 ; present at Lord Herbert's marriage, 38 ; joins in dance at Lord Cobham's, 39 ; grave displeasure with Pembroke, 42 ; approves the match between Letitia Knollys and Mr. Paget, 48 ; her death, 58
Emilie, the Lady, 135
Englefield, Sir Francis, 151, 157
Essex, Earl of, sickness and imprisonment, 30 ; treatment of privy councillors, 31

F

FITTON, Alice, Lady, parentage and marriage, 1 ; children, 3, 158 ; mention of, in letters, 7, 11, 18 ; godmother to Anne's daughter, 17 ; letters to Anne, 18, 43, 81, 83 ; legacy in Anne's will, 157 ; monument at Gawsworth, 158

Index

- Fitton, Anne (*see* Newdigate)
Fitton crest, 77, 102, 157, 168
Fitton, Sir Edward, Kt., President of Connaught, 1 ; falls out with the Lord Deputy, 2 ; memorial brass, *ib.*
Fitton, Sir Edward, Kt., President of Munster, 3 ; marriage and children, *ib.* ; maintains his daughter after marriage, 5, 92 ; letter to him from Sir Wm. Knollys about Mary at Court, 10 ; his letters to Anne, 18, 43, 77 ; on birth of grandchild, 18 ; about Mary, 43 ; to Sir R. Cecil, 44 ; mentioned in Sir R. Leveson's will, 74 ; death, 79
Fitton, Sir Edward, Bart., his daughter Penelope inherits Gaws-
worth, 5 ; letter to Anne, 20 ; created a baronet, 172
Fitton, Francis, marriage, 20 ; letters to Anne, 20, 45, 61 ; to Sir John Newdigate, 85 ; voyage to Ireland, 20 ; his will, 85
Fitton, Mary, birth, 3 ; portraits, 6, 27, 157, 165 ; appointed maid of honour, 7 ; Sir W. Knollys' promise of protection, 10 ; mention of her in his letters to Anne, 12, 15-17, 21, 30, 32, 41, 47-49 ; in her father's letters, 43, 77 ; in her mother's letters, 19, 81, 84 ; in Sir Richard Leveson's letters, 57, 59, 60, 65, 67 ; in Francis Fitton's letters and will, 45, 61, 85, 86 ; in Sir Fulke Greville's letters, 76 ; in Francis Beaumont's letters, 119, 123, 135 ; her letter to Anne, 28 ; was she the "dark lady" ? 35 ; Wm. Kempe's dedication, 36 ; takes part in masque at Lord Cobham's, 39 ; intrigue with Pembroke, 40-46 ; disgrace and detention, 42 ; vain hope of marriage, 43, 44 ; secret return home, 45 ; discouragement of Knollys' devotion, 48-50 ; scandal concerning her in Sir Peter Leycester's MSS., 77, 78 ; marriage to Polewhele, 82 ; mention of "that boy" by Lady Fitton, 81 ; widowhood, 88 ; children by Polewhele, *ib.* ; second marriage to Lougher, 135 ; mentioned in Anne's will, 157 ; again a widow, 158 ; children by Lougher, 159 ; her death and will, *ib.* ; monument at Gaws-
worth, 158, 173

Index

- Fitton, Penelope, parentage and marriage, 3; succeeds to Gaws-
worth, 3; son created Earl of Macclesfield, 3, 27, 172
Fitton, portraits at Arbury, 165-174
Fitton, Richard, 3, 84
Furnivall, Dr., disputes the authenticity of the portraits at Arbury,
viii, 165, 173

G

- GATACRE, Ann, 159
Gatacre, John, 83, 88, 159
Gawsworth, 3, 155, 168; monument at, 158, 173
Gerard, Sir Charles, 3, 27, 172
Gerard, Penelope, Lady, *ib.*
Gidea Hall, 170
Gorges, Sir Ferdinando, 31
Greville, Sir Fulke, his letters to Anne, 25, 26, 57, 80; death, 81
Greville, Sir Fulke (Lord Brooke), his letter to Anne, 72;
mentioned by Philip Mainwaringe, 86; tragic death, 87;
monument, 87
Grey, Elizabeth, Lady, 17, 55, 113, 125, 135, 138, 140, 172; her
letters to Anne, 141, 142; second marriage, 144; eldest son
created Earl of Stamford, 144, 172; mention of her portrait,
157, 173
Grey, Sir John, 113, 115, 125, 140
Grey, Lord, of Groby, 113, 140, 142

H

- HAREFIELD, exchanged for Arbury, 4; bought by Sir Thomas
Egerton, 5; Queen Elizabeth's visit, 5; monument in church,
98; Anne's place of burial, 153
Harley, Sir Robert, 74, 75
181

Harrington,

Index

Harrington, Sir John, 62
Hastings, Lady Dorothy, 39
Hawkyns, Lady, 41, 42, 44
Henshaw, William, 97, 148, 157
Herbert, William, Earl of Pembroke, 38, 40, 42-44, 46
Herbert, Lord, son of Earl of Worcester, 38
Hoby, Margaret, Lady, 8
Howard of Effingham, Lord, 54
Hunsdon, Lord, 8

J

JAMES, King, accession, 58-60, 62; creation of peers, 63;
F. Beaumont's oration to, 124

K

KEMPE, William, 36
Knollys, Dorothy, Lady, 9, 11, 51, 52
Knollys, Elizabeth, Lady, marriage, 51; sons, 52; litigation for the
Banbury peerage, 52
Knollys, Sir Francis, 9
Knollys, Sir Henry, 9, 48
Knollys, Letitia, 48
Knollys, Sir William, parentage and marriage, 9; promises to
protect Mary, 10; letters to Anne chiefly about Mary, 12, 15,
16, 21, 23, 29, 31, 32, 40, 46, 48, 49; godfather to Anne's
daughter and son, 21, 50; anxiety about Essex, 29; anecdote
by l'Estrange, 34; distress about Mary, 40, 46; his constancy,
48, 49; created Lord Knollys and Earl of Banbury, 51; second
marriage, 51; mentioned in later letters, 71, 77; Master of
the Wards, 144; Anne's appeals to him, 144-146; death, 51;
litigation for peerage, 52

Index

L

- LASSO, Orlando di, 101, 136
Leigh, Sir Francis, 160
Leigh, Julian, *ib.*
L'Estrange, Sir Nicholas, anecdote by, 34
Leveson, Sir John, 75
Leveson, Penelope, 64, 73, 74
Leveson, Sir Richard, birth and parentage, 53; rapid promotion, 54; marriage, *ib.*; letters to Anne, 55, 58, 64-71; on accession of King James, 59; on projected nurse for royal infant, 68-71; death, 72; will, 73; scandal concerning him and Mary, 77-79
Leveson, Sir Walter, 54, 66, 88, 152
Leycester, Sir Peter, his MSS., 77-79, 135
Lougher, Elizabeth, 159
Lougher, John, marriage, 78, 135; death, 158; will, 159
Lougher, Mary (*see* Fitton)
Luls, Arnold, 160
Luls, Susanna, *ib.*

M

- MACCLESFIELD, Countess of, mistake as to, 27, 171-173
Macclesfield, Earl of, 27, 172
Mainwaringe, Edmund, 69, 74
Mainwaringe, Philip, 86, 91, 95
Mar, Earl of, 62
Martin, Mrs., 40
Mary, Princess, 72
Massarene, Viscount, 161
Matthew, Tobie, 42
Maxey, Mildred, Lady, 55, 170, 172, 173
183

Maxey,

Index

Maxey, Sir Henry, 169
Meyor, William, 65
Montjoye, Lord, 59, 61

N

NEVILL, Elizabeth (*see* Lady Grey)
Nevill, Mrs., 59
Newdigate, Anne (Fitton), Lady, birth and parentage, 3 ; marriage, 4 ; portraits of, 6, 27, 154, 165 ; letters from Arabella Stewart, 7 ; from Henry Carye, *ib.* ; from Sir William Knollys, 12, 15, 16, 21, 23, 29, 31-33, 40, 46, 48, 49 ; from Sir Edward Fitton, 18, 43, 77 ; from Lady Fitton, 18, 43, 81, 83 ; from her brother Edward, 20 ; from her sister Mary, 28 ; from Francis Fitton, 20, 45, 61 ; from Sir Fulke Greville, 25, 26, 57, 80 ; from Sir Fulke Greville (Lord Brooke), 72 ; from Sir Richard Leveson, 55, 58, 64-71 ; from Edward Reed, 62 ; from Philip Mainwaringe, 86, 95 ; from Francis Beaumont, 100, 102, 104, 105, 111-114, 117, 120, 122, 124, 130, 136-138 ; from Lady Ashburnham, 128 ; from Lady Grey, 141, 142 ; from Robert Phillips, 146 ; her letters to F. Beaumont, 103, 110 ; to Lady Grey, 141 ; to her steward, 148, 149, 151 ; first leaves her father's house for Arbury, 7 ; birth of eldest child, 17 ; of two sons, 53 ; of second and third daughters, 67, 88 ; becomes a candidate for post of nurse to royal infant, 68-71 ; Francis Fitton's bequest, 86 ; widowhood, 88 ; petitions for wardship of eldest son, 89, 92 ; erects monument to her husband, 98 ; rejection of a suitor, 130-138, 142, 143 ; petitions to Lord Knollys, 144-146 ; anxiety for son's marriage, 146, 150, 151 ; declining health, 148-152 ; death, 153 ; burial at Harefield, *ib.* ; will, 154-158, 168, 169, 173 ; last message to her friends, 157, 163
Newdigate, Anne, Lady Skeffington, birth, 88 ; marriage, 161 ; son becomes Lord Massarene, *ib.* ; death and epitaph, *ib.*
Newdegate,

Index

- Newdegate, John, marriage, 4 ; buys Arbury, *ib.* ; money difficulties, *ib.* ; death, *ib.*
- Newdigate, Sir John, birth, 4 ; marriage, *ib.* ; knighted, 49 ; mention of him in letters to Anne, 19, 21, 25, 34, 46, 47, 48, 56, 60, 64, 66, 70, 73, 82, 84, 85, 95 ; letter from Francis Fitton, 85 ; illness and death, 88-91 ; monument at Harefield, 98 ; mentioned in Anne's will, 154-156
- Newdigate, John, birth, 53 ; petitions for his wardship, 89, 92 ; mentioned in letters and petitions, 82, 90, 94, 144, 145, 149-152 ; marriage, 160 ; death, *ib.*
- Newdigate, Lettice, birth, 67 ; mentioned in letters, 82 ; death, 161 ; administration to her estate, 169
- Newdigate, Mary (afterwards Bolton), birth, 17 ; christening, 22 ; mentioned in letters, 18, 21, 22, 30, 32, 47, 57, 60, 82, 123, 131, 135, 142 ; marriage, 161
- Newdigate, Richard, birth, 53 ; legacy from godfather, 75 ; mentioned in letters, 82 ; marriage, 160 ; judge under Cromwell, *ib.* ; Chief Justice, *ib.* ; baronetcy, *ib.* ; succeeds to Arbury, *ib.*
- Newdigate, Sir Roger, 166, 172
- Northumberland, Countess of, 20
- Nottingham, Earl of, 54
- Nuneaton, carrier from, 150

O

ONSLow, Mrs., 39

P

PALAMON, 123, 135

Perton, 83, 88, 159, 176

Phillips, Robert, letter to Anne, 146

Polewhele, Mary (*see* Fitton)

185

Polewhele,

Index

- Polewhele, William, marries Mary Fitton, 78, 82 ; captain of the Lyon's Whelpe, 83 ; opinions concerning him, 84, 85 ; children, 82, 88 ; home at Perton, 88 ; death and will, *ib.*
Polewhele, William (the younger), 159
Popham, Lord Chief Justice, 31
Portraits of Anne, 6, 27, 154, 165 ; of Mary, 6, 27, 157, 165 ; of Sir Richard Leveson, 54 ; of Lady Grey, 157, 173 ; of Lady Maxey, 169, 170, 173

R

- REED, Edward, 62, 149
Renaud, Dr. Frank, article on Memorial Brasses in St. Patrick's, Dublin, ix, 3, 20
Rich, Lady, 61
Russell, Mrs. Bess, 39

S

- SACKVILLE, Sir Thomas, 63
Salisbury, Earl of, Anne's petition to him, 89 (*see also* Cecil)
"Saunders, Cosyn," 109 ; mentioned in F. Beaumont's letters, 108, 118, 120, 125, 130-134, 136-138
Saunders, Matthew, 109, 118, 138
Saunders, William, 99
Sidney, Sir Philip, 61, 79, 87
Sidney, Sir Robert, letters from Rowland Whyte, 38
Skeffington, Lady, 161, 162
Somerset, Lady Blanche, 39
Southwell, Mrs., *ib.*
Spencer, Sir Robert, 62
Stamford, Countess of, mistake as to, 171, 172
Stamford, Earl of, 144, 172, 173
Stanhope, Sir John, 41
186

Stanley,

Index

Stanley, Lady Frances, marriage, 5 ; her opinion of Mary, 84
Stewart, Arabella, letter to Anne, 7
Stoughton Grange, 99, 115, 125, 126

T

TIMANTHES, 111

Tirrische, John, 74, 75

Titchborne, Sir Richard, 88

Tyler, Mr. Thomas, theory of the "dark lady," ix, xii, 35-38 ;
extracts from his work on Shakespeare's Sonnets, 36-40, 41,
42, 44 ; disputes the authenticity of the portraits at Arbury,
viii, 165, 169

W

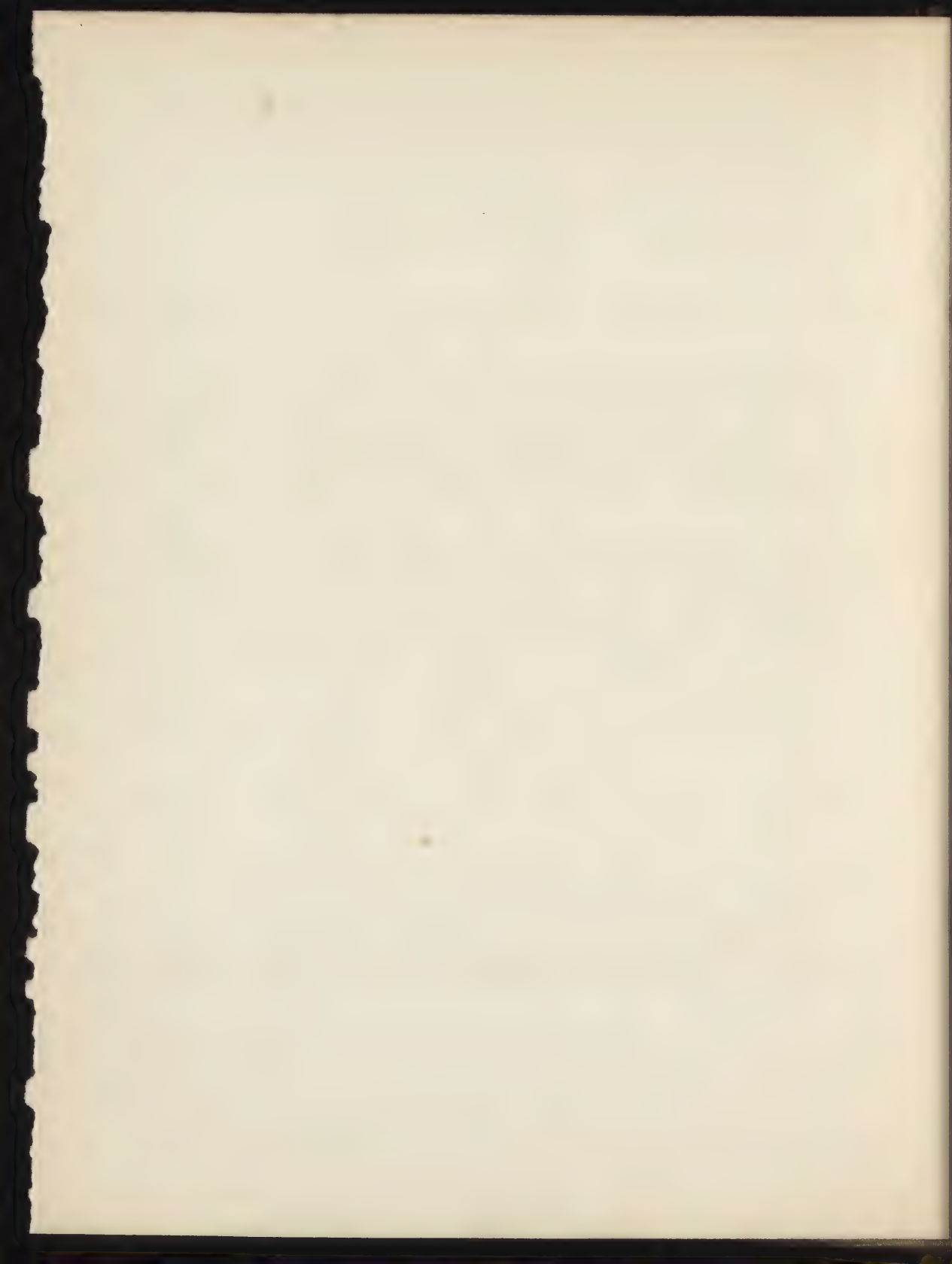
WHITALL, Mr., 81, 95-97, 156

White, William, 98

Whyte, Rowland, his letter to Sir Robert Sidney, 38

Winchester, Marquess of, 39

Worcester, Earl of, 31, 38



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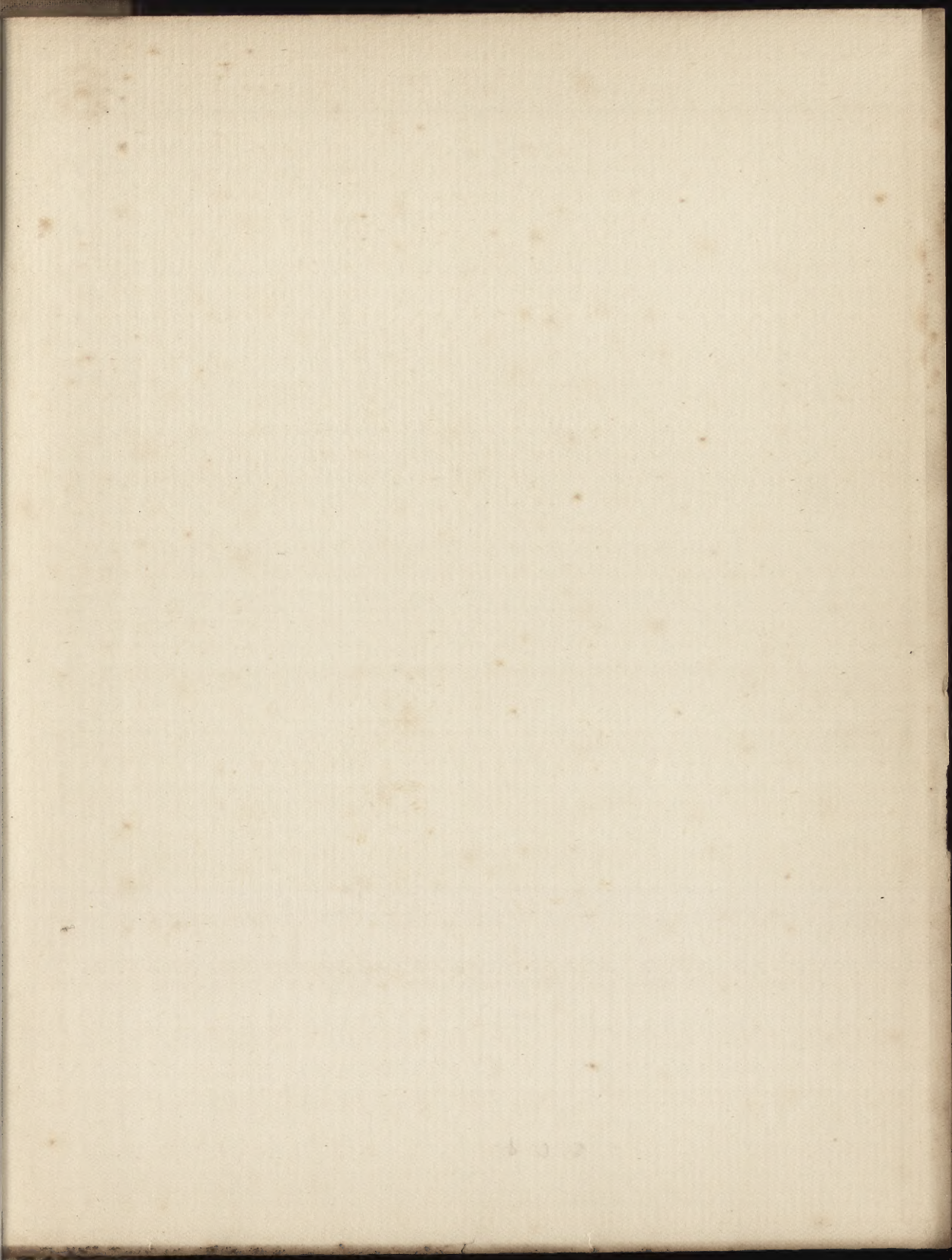
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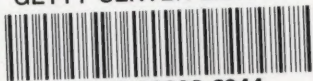
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